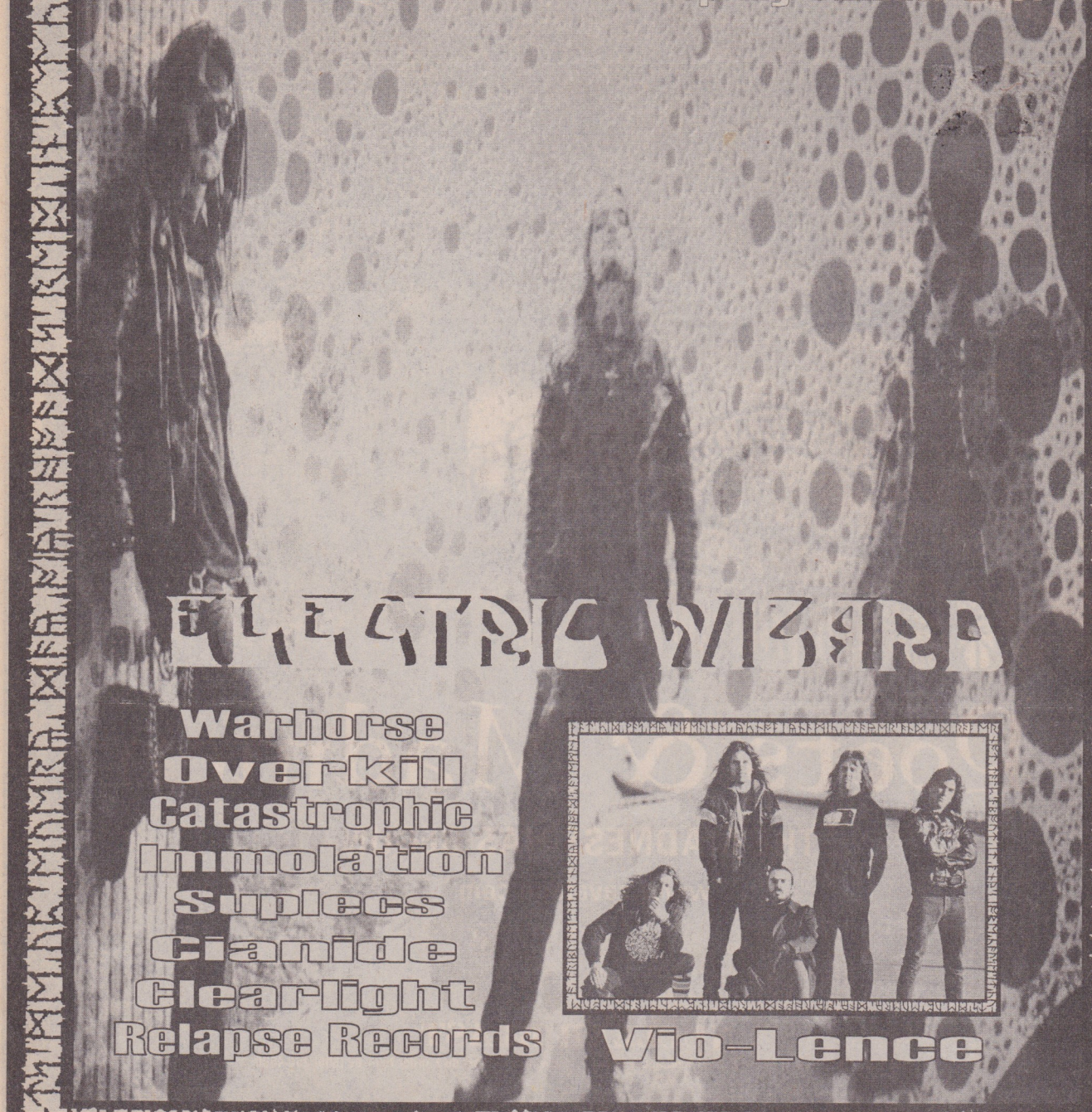
Midwest Metal

Issue #23 Spring/Summer 2001



Electric Wizard

Warhorse
Overkill
Catastrophic
Immolation
Suplecs
Cianide
Clearlight
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"Diary of a Madman, Walk the line again today. Entries of confusion, Dear diary, I'm here to stay" **Osbourne 1982**

Don't ask me why, but the above is what I've been feeling the whole time trying to create **Issue #23**. Just confused and mad and just dealing with everything as it comes. I wanted to try something different here, but page wise it's very restrictive, so we'll do it the old fashioned way. It's been so long between issues I don't even know where to start. So I guess I'll start there, people have been asking what's the hold up and why the long wait and where have I been? No excuses, no delays this one issue per year, as the breakdown seems to be, is all I really have the time for. Not only is time a factor, but also inspiration is a close second. This issue I'm totally into. This issue, to me represents a fanzine, I'm a fan of everything in this issue, and when it's all said and done that's the way it should be. The last issue was kind of a weird period. I was into some of the stuff, but it was so disorganized and I almost had this "whatever it takes to just get something out" type attitude. All I wanted was to be back in the saddle and unfortunately the issue suffered a bit. This one is totally different and I couldn't be happier. Kicking things off would be our cover, the mighty **Electric Wizard**. Funny the cover of this issue should be completed on the same night they played Chicago with WarHorse. A fucking show I will not soon forget. A fucking amazing display of heaviness, both bands, trios, delivered Doom Metal they way it should be. I could go on for days on both performances, but if you missed this tour and are a fan of the style, you fucking lost out. I loved every second of it and was not disappointed at all. We've got a few "legends" in here as well, **OverKill** and **Immolation**; bands that have slugged it out for years and have become institutions in their genres are present. The aforementioned **WarHorse** and **Catastrophic** and **MKO Clearlight** and **Suplecs** from New Orleans, all heavy and different in their own right are in here too. Chicago's **Cianide** have a new album out and are in here as well as Matt Jacobsen of **Relapse Records**. **End It** is a band from the Detroit area that I think will blow a lot of people away when given the chance. Finally, it gives me great pleasure to bring you one of my favorite bands EVER, the ultimate defininition of "not for everyone", San Francisco's **Vio-Lence**. As always lots of people to thank: Me, myself and I for the vision and the persistence, my close friends and family for the support, I thank you all. I'd like to thank the companies who support the vision and most importantly understand the conditions in which the vision is created, thanks to the staff of the following: Relapse Records, the Century Family, Metal Blade, Victory, Escape Artist, Southern Lord, Peaceville and all the labels who support us in every way possible, Diana and Ilka at Fly PR for doing a killer job, John Spingola @ WEA for ALWAYS looking out for me, James Rhodes, Pavement Music, Paula Hogan @ Manic Media/Candlelight, Patrick Lowe @ Roadrunner, Jon Paris for all his hard work and support and for always having the time to talk: good luck at Spitfire man! Thanks to Tomas Pascual for the opportunity, Sophie Diamantis, Drew Stone, thanks to the following bands: Rick (representin' w/the Line 6) Scythe, Jon (no toothpaste, no deodorant, etc.) Necromancer, General Diabolical (mothra man) Slaughter, Dave (Mr. Coffee, Mr. Cool) Hellstorm and Carcass (Kerrang!) Chris and Usurper, WhackPack members worldwide! Mr. Ali (Bootsy), Thanks to Zac and CorpseEater (for giving up the bunk of Death) of Failed Humanity, Ross of Immolation, Trevor of Catastrophic, Mike and Scott and Andy of Cianide, Durel of Suplecs, Jus, Tim and Mark of Electric Wizard, Mike, Todd and Jerry of WarHorse, Jimmy Bower, Ron Holzner, the Bongzilla dudes, Bobby of OverKill, Matt Jacobsen, Carl Schultz, Gordon Conrad of Relapse Records, Robb Flynn, Adam Duce and the MH Band/Crew/Family, Phil Demmel/Technocracy, Sean Killian, Ron and Opie Taylor from Lake Shore Dr., Kevin, Ted B, Brian Burdue, Steve Nazar (Dirtbag!) for the MH bootleg, Tre, Frank, Art, Joel in Memphis, Jamey Hatebreed (where's the music!!), Cradle Of Filth band and crew, John and Scepter, Adam and Adrian of Unrestrained!, the rest of the Canadian Metal Mafia- Alex Ristic, Chris Bruni thanks for everything! The staff at Chipster PR, Deena Dasein and Jim DeRogatis for always doing their part for Metal, Matt from Release whom I got totally fucking shitfaced with on the plane ride to London, Ben and Orange Goblin, Was ("they sound like a six pense four track recording, man") for being super fucking cool, All the zines I trade with or just read, all the Editors who keep the flame burning strong such as: Metal Core, Ill Literature, BW&BK, Hammerhead, Ear Split, Spear, Cat Butt, Pit, Thrash Em All, Canadian Assault, Marty and Worm Gear, Jeff & Metal Rules!, Rip and Tear and the many I am forgetting. **04/06/2001**...When a musician or whatever writes a song it inspires them, right? Well seeing I don't play an instrument, I get a fucking adrenaline rush when a great interview takes place. Last night I spoke to Wino of **Spirit Caravan** and I cannot even begin to describe how fucking amazing it was to speak with him and hear his tales. Just an amazing guy, super fucking cool and when I hung up the phone I was just so into his words, his attitude, his music that I had to have him in this issue. So what a way to go to print, I can't wait for this one to come back! So that's it man, that's where I'm at as this issue goes to print I'm pretty happy with the way it's come out, I wish I had everything I needed (all the ad's in, the money etc.), but that's just the typical thing that happens in the game. So thanks to all who will be checking this out, thanks for the continued support over 23 issues! We're going to be printing letters, so if you like something, hate something or just want to see your awful spelling next to ours, send something in. Finally everything I do is dedicated to my family, my blood, my pride, my strength. Maxwel *H2BDILY*

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NEWS/RUMOURS/FACTS

Send all news and related issues to: TVader666@aol.com

Finally some **Judas Priest** news. The upcoming album will be titled 'Demolition'. It comes out May 28th in Europe so expect a US date around then. It's about time!!! Also watch for the non-Ripper **JP** catalog to be re-issued later in 2001. Titles will have two bonus tracks as well as the usual crap found on label cash in's.

What The Fuck, Chuck?

Another Metal musician stricken with Cancer. Chuck Billy, vocalist for **Testament**, announced he has Cancer. Someone better get a hold of Chuck Biscuits to see if he's OK!

The **King Diamond** band, now featuring Guitarist Mike (Hexenhaus, MF,) Wead, is currently in Texas at Nomad Studios recording the follow up to the 'House Of God' album with Kol Marshall. Early reports hear the title will be 'Abigial II-The Revenge'. Watch for a Fall release through **Metal Blade**. King also is one of many Metal lumaniries that will appear on Foo Fighters main man Dave Grohl's side project called **Probot**. Also appearing are Snake (Ex.Voi-Vod), Lemmy, Wino and more.

Oakland's **Machine Head** return to action this Summer with the highly anticipated 'SuperCharger'. Speaking of MH, New Orleans sons of sludge **Crowbar** have added ex-MH (demo days) Drummer Tony Costanza and will have a new LP out later this year.

Dwell Records leap into the original side of things by signing Chicago's **The Chasm** and LA's **Coffin Texts** is over. The label has dropped both bands and will continue only with their tribute series. **The Chasm** is speaking with labels as of this writing.

Necrophagia, who have their retrospective 'Legacy Of Horror, Gore and Sickness' out now on Baphomet, will return with a new LP Halloween 2001.

Deicide are currently writing another album which will probably be their last for Roadrunner.

Watch for an EP of covers from **Deceased** this summer. Included covers will be Hirax, D.R.I., Anthrax and more.

Victory have signed Sacramento's **Hoods**.

Immortal as well as **Marduk** have split from Osmose and Immortal have a new home at **Nuclear Blast**.

Marduk will team up with **Deicide** for an incredible tour later in the Spring.

Pessimist will have their 3rd album, 'The Greater Of Two Evils' out on Lost Disciple this Summer. Go to **www.pessimist.com** for more info.

Iced Earth will unleash their new album 'Horror Show' in May. The band now features Richard [**Death/Control Denied**, Burning Inside] Christy and Bassist Steve DiGorgio.

Black Sabbath will again headline Ozz Fest.

Kreator are working with famed producer Andy Sneap on their upcoming album. It is heavily rumored that it will be a "back to their roots" type of release.

Halford, fronted by Metal God Rob Halford, are releasing a live album called 'Live Insurrection' which also includes three new studio tracks.

Corrosion **O**f **C**onformity founder **Reed Mullin** announced he was leaving the band for good. Mullin, who's back injury forced the sticksman to miss his first tour ever, stated musical differences. Mullin now fronts his new band **Brown**.

Internal Bleeding who have been quiet since the release of 1999's 'Driven To Conquer' have inked a new deal with **Olympic**.

Madball have called it quits after four albums, tons of replacements and a lifetime of turmoil.

Chicago Rock/Metal legend **Ron Holzner** (**Trouble Moustache**) recently did a few gigs playing Bass with LA's Goatsnake supporting Electric Wizard/WarHorse as a sort of trial basis [or Bass-is]. Best of luck to Ron in whatever he does!

Video/DVD News

Iron Maiden will be releasing a live DVD hopefully soon. Recorded at their Rock In Rio appearance Jan. '01.

Megadeth's video history, all 25 or so, will be released through Sanctuary Music this year.

Gore Fiends **Necrophagia** plan on releasing their 'Through The Eyes Of The Dead' masterpiece on DVD.

COC are also preparing for a live album/DVD showcasing the band's 'Volume Dealer' line up later this year.

Cradle Of Filth's upcoming US tour will begin in July and will have support from **Nile** and **Amen**. **Nile** will have found a replacement for departed V/B Chief Spires for the tour.

Krisiun will have their first two, hard to find, releases 'Black Force Domain' and 'Apocalyptic Revelations' re-released through **Century Media** this Fall.

Milwaukee Metal Fest XVI will be held at the Milwaukee Auditorium, same place, on **Aug 3/4**.

Former **AngelCorpse** live guitarist Bill Taylor will be joining **Immolation** for their touring duties for 'Closer To A World Below'.

Tomas Lindberg is the new vocalist of **The Crown**.

Unleashed has reformed.

Chicago's **Scepter** have the bulk of their upcoming Merciless LP, 'Fucking Metal Motherfuckers' ready to go. I heard some advance tracks live recently and I'm looking forward to it's release. "Bottom Feeder" and "Swastika" were a few of the highlights.

Napalm Death, with **Soilent Green** & **Isis** in support begin touring this Spring.

Midwest Metal #23 Top 15 Picks and Playlists

Eyehategod-Confederacy
Neurosis-Sovereign
WarHorse-As Heaven...
Carnal Forge-FireDemon
M Creation-Envenomed
End It-Keep Swingin'
Church Of Misery-Masters..
Nile-BlackSeeds Vengeance
ElectricWizard-Dopethrone
Isis-Celestial
Nifelheim- Servents Of...
Cathedral-Endtyme
VA-Contaminated 3.0
Unrestrained! Issue #15
Elec Wizard/WarHorse Live

Tom

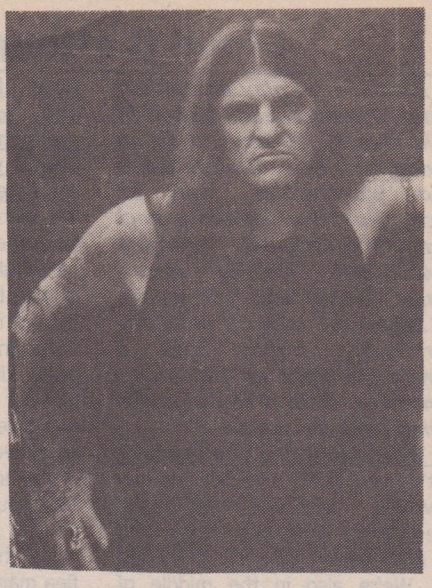
Vio-Lence: All
Soilent Green-Pussysoul
The Beatles-Abbey Road
B Sabbath-Live Evil & Vol 4
Dio-Magica/Anthology
Obituary-Slowly We Rot
Usurper-Necronemesis LP
Exhorder-SlaughterIn The...
Lynyrd Skynyrd: All
Aerosmith:Toys In The Attic
www.blabbermouth.com
www.KNAC.com

Jeff

Darkthrone-A Blaze...
Kreator-Pleasure To Kill
Failed Humanity-Razor's...
Dark Funeral-In The Sign
Deicide-Legion
Slayer-South Of Heaven
Deceased-Blueprints...

Picking The Brain

This is a PTB with Scott "Wino" Weinrich of Spirit Caravan. One of the coolest, yet hardest guy's in the World, Wino's seen it all and lives to tell about it. The new SC album, 'The Elusive Truth' comes out May 29 on Tolotta Records. I suggest those into Rock, Doom or whatever you want to call it, to check it out because it's a great album. www.spiritcaravan.com or www.tolotta.com



FOOD

Well I don't eat meat anymore, though I still enjoy seafood and eggs. I'm just not into what's happening with the meat industry, I just think the industry is into making money so they're not feeding the animals anything that costs a penny, so. But I still have a major thing for lobster! **How's eating on the road?** Weird, but I actually put on weight on the road! It's hard to eat good out there so you're eating pizza or going to The Waffle House or even junk food on long drives, usually eating really late and then going to sleep.

DRINK

I don't drink alcohol anymore; I was a very heavy drinker for a long time. I'd say I drank heavy from age 12 to, well into my late 30's. I've been off alcohol for about four years now. I mean that's the only thing that ever got me into trouble was when I was drunk. I did drugs my whole live, but never got into trouble with them, but when I'd land in jail it was alcohol related. I mean I've got beer in my fridge right now, but there's no temptation. So I drink a lot of mineral water, I actually learned the value of mineral water when I was drinking a lot because it cures hangovers! So I carried that over.

DRUGS

I love marijuana. I think is the best drug on Earth and I'm not afraid or ashamed to admit it. I notice if I'm smoking a lot on tour I'll end up losing my voice and all that, especially in Texas where the weed gets pretty bad! I took my first hit of acid when I was 12, but my main love affair with drugs for the majority of my musical years was meth amphetamines. It was such an exhilarating high, when I moved to CA. to join St. Vitus, that's when it was really preavalent out there and that's when I picked up a really bad habit. But I lived on meth for years and I got lucky. Most people who do speed everyday usually end up dead or in jail or real sick. I never dug Heroin that much, to me it was too much of a lazy drug. I was more into staying up for a few days, walking around, like, really early in the morning and finding cool stuff in the trash rather than sitting in a chair drooling! But Heroin is a bummer, it'll kill ya. So I just never dug it that much, I did it hundreds of times, just never got hooked. Plus it would've ruined my speed high!

MUSIC

I have my favorites, I have my old favorites, I like a lot of Zappa. Not so much the verbal stuff, but more like 'Shut up and play your guitar', and I love listening to his solos, man, sometimes they just take me away. I also really, really like Govt. Mule. I think Warren Haynes, fuck, he's the new messiah! He's got a modern style of playing, but his mastery of the instrument, weather it's slide or whatever just amazes me everyday! I like a lot of Eastern music as well, sitar music, anything that's a little dark or melancholy, no happy stuff. I like Coltrane, Miles Davis, I'm also a major Beatles fan. I didn't care for the Lennon or McCartney solo stuff, I respect them both, but Lennon got really happy. I liked him better when he was a druggy, same with Clapton.

SEX

Well (laughing), I'm hetero. I've been married now for about two and a half years, we've got a kid on the way. But back in my drinking/drug days I could never say no to a pretty face. I was way into the "let's get naked, shoot some drugs and have sex" stuff. But when I got my head together and met my wife, I made a heavy commitment to stay faithful to my wife and will be forever.

LOVE

I think it's important. I also think it's an abstract concept, but it's something you definitely feel. I mean if you lose something you love, then for sure your heart's heavy. But it's strong, when it hits you, you know.

HATE

I used to have a lot of hate, man. I'm still healing from my childhood, a lot of juvinile jails and I hated the establishment. But nowadays, I hate intolerance, selfishness things like that. I'm still totally capable of hate, but for a long time I've tried to control my anger, but deep down it's still there. I feel sorry for myself and who ever brings it out!

WORK

I've been told I have a good work ethic. If I'm doing a job, I'll do some stagehand stuff every now and then, but when I do, I pull my weight. Work is a hard thing for people to swallow, but a strong eight hours will make ya feel good.

OVERKILL

Blood [Letting] Is Thicker Than Water

The second I hit play and album opener "Thunderhead" kicked in I told myself, it's time to do an Overkill interview. Their latest is titled* 'Bloodletting' *and it's exactly what you should expect from NY's original Wrecking Crew...100% METAL! Here's vocalist Bobby "Blitz" Ellsworth. And before we begin, I must say interviewing Bobby was a definite highlight as the man's been there, done that and keeps coming back for more.

MM: How's your day been so far?

B: It's been busy! I've done a few interviews, some live radio spots, some internet stuff, but it's good to stay busy seeing that it's promotion time. We're also in the middle of putting a tour together, so yeah, very busy.

I've never interviewed Overkill before so there's a lot of old stuff I've been interested in hearing about, so bear with me.

No problem.

I'd like to start way back when the band first started. I'd like to hear about the scene you guys came up in and really, just how come Overkill has refused to bend after all these years.

Well it's funny because I've been asked a few times what we envisioned for ourselves. Did we envision this? We kinda set a certain standard for ourselves back then when it came to our music. Along with that was a certain value that this meant a lot to us and it basically evolved from a cover band to an original band. But it just took on this extreme amount of value that has followed us all these years. I don't know if we had a plan to remain unbendable, but it happened along the way. But back then the plan was to exist week to week, to try to get signed. I was pessimistic when we did get signed, when our first release came out I thought "oh, we'll never get a chance for a second". I really thought we were going to be a one album band. And boom, here's the second. And then the third, so once things really started rolling the edge may not have been so sharp, but the value remained. It was our original standard, are we satisfied?

How about Megaforce Records and Johnny Z. Obviously he made his mark way back when doing what he did, were you attracted to him or vice versa?

We were considered, in the NY/NJ area, the pains in the ass. Which was beautiful! Our first manager owned a club in Brooklyn called L'Amour. And [before he managed us] we would go down there all the time to drop off press kits. So I remember handing him our latest and saying "why don't you give us a gig, people come see us at every other place", and he turns to me and say's "because you suck!". "But you're a fucking pain in my ass, so you got next Friday". Johnny Z, same thing. He'd started off at this flea market on Route 18 to setting up in his house to finally doing it all office like. We were selling demo's through him, we had an EP there too which was selling better than some signed bands. You gotta remember back then we were like the local thing in NY/NJ, so Johnny signed us, basically because he didn't want anyone else signing us. And through time we developed a great relationship. Johnny Z's the reason this all happened, Johnny and Marsha. And Marsha, in the early days, had a bigger interest in the band so it was a good relationship from the start.

Overkill's shows back then were more than your average stacks and riser presentation. I remember his comments how the show was there before the music!

The infamous show that he was talking about was when we supported Anvil from Canada on Halloween night 1984. So we just pulled our whole everything for this show and blew Johnny away. He had come to the show at L'Amour to see Anvil because they were looking for a new deal. So Johnny had one more position on the roster to fill and we got it.

I read that the Overkill logo, the neon green color was a marketing thing. To make it easier to see in clubs. True?

Yeah. Absolutely.

No shit?

Yep, we were a little smarter than everyone thought! Besides, everyone else's were red. And when you were at a club, the shirts of the day, the Metallica, Slayer, Anthrax, Manowar they all had blood red logo's. And from a distance, they all seemed to blend into one. You could see an **Overkill** shirt from across the club, and that's what we wanted. And if you had a bunch of them together it looked like someone was shining a black light on them, but essentially we just wanted to try and separate ourselves from the pack, any way we could.

When you first appeared with the logo itself, was there ever any slack for the letters being, you know, borrowed from...

Maiden, they're right from them.

Yeah, but you know how people are, didn't they...

Yeah, sure I suppose some people did, but we didn't sound like them.

Of course not. OK, from Megaforce came the whole Atlantic Records deal and like it or not Overkill became major label players.

Yeah, it went from Megaforce with Caroline distributing to all of a sudden Atlantic distributing our second record. I mean it went from 25,000 units to 100,000 units, which is a huge increase to someone with no video or radio play.

But in the back of your minds were you trying to get a major deal? Obviously you remember the late 80's when it was everyone and their mother signing to a major label, especially bands that didn't belong there. Was this the case with Overkill?

It was just kind of a pleasant surprise. Back then we were just concerned with the music, the artwork, the shows, the t-shirts etc. I gotta tell ya for a few years there, after the work was done, I was there for the free beer! There's not much vision when you're in the tank, ya know? But it happened and I think the thing that separated us from the whole "major" part of it was, we didn't really care. It was never an issue with us, things like "well if they have this, we should have this" it

didn't matter to us. We'd be like, "can we get this?", if so let's get it and make it work.

Touring. Overkill has always seemed to get the best tours, what tours stick out?

Well tours were never bad for us. That's one place I can honestly say we've always excelled with, live. We started as a live band, we belonged there and this was the way we paid our dues back when we were the pains in the ass of NY/NJ. So there was never a bad tour. We were set to go out with Megadeth in '87 and people were saying "you guys are gonna have a hard time with these guys". I came home after the tour saying "these are some of the nicest guys I've met in the industry". I mean we hung out together, partied together and bonded. It was never "get off my stage" or anything like that. Same with Slayer, same with Motorhead same with just about any band we've toured with. I think that stems from bands who's expectations are so damn high, if they don't reach those expectations they're pissed off and bitter. I mean we never had any damn expectations (Laughs)!

Any cities back then, or even now, stick out as good or bad?

Well for one we've always done well in Europe. The Europeans always say we stink like Red, White and Blue, which I agree with (laughs)! But I'd have to say NY. I mean this was/is our turf, it always had this gutsy feel to me. Like Frank Sinatra said if you can do it here, you can do it anywhere. So we always had a leg up on bands who maybe were somewhat intimidated to play here because it was home. Cleveland has also always been like a second home to us. It's just a great rock n roll city, always has, always will. On that Megadeth tour we recorded the live stuff that was on the 'Fuck You' EP in Cleveland, so that endeared us to the city and the city to us. Years later we went back and did the 'Wrecking Your Neck' double live album there as well. But we had good times in Cincinnati, Detroit basically most of the cities east of the Mississippi have been great to **Overkill**.

Something that's always been present with Overkill has been the member changes. Was it something that bothered the band or was it just something that came with the business?

Well no one likes to change members, but it happens. Rat Skates, simply didn't want to be here anymore. Bye, see ya. Bobby Gustafson it was some personal stuff and he and D.D. [Verni-B] weren't really getting along and it was a big decision to say the least. It came down to a lot of things, but who I was the most comfortable with, writing wise was a big part of it. I mean all the people who have been in this band, their hearts are what really matter. Not one person after Bobby Gustafson, was ever asked to leave. Sid Falack he left, he was disillusioned with a few things. He was like "I don't want to be here, I don't like the way things are run" so we said, "what can we change to make you happier", he said "nothing, I'm out of here".

No shit? He had some personal stuff going on right?

Yeah, I don't think it was just us [the band], not at all. He'd gotten hit by a truck, for god sakes. He had some trouble walking, he really couldn't see too well out of that one eye, even the whole left side of his body was affected, so there were other factors. Now the Cavvino and Gant thing, Rob had an opportunity to race motorcycles, a love of his forever. I even saw him on Espn one time placing in the top 10! And Gant started a family. Marino started a family and Joe Comeau (now with Annihilator,-ed.) had opportunity. Joe for instance wanted to do both, and you just can't do it! So we've always had the gung-ho attitude, it's just happens that D.D. and I are never gonna quit this band! We've always tried to keep the name of the band more important than who's in the band, and it's **Overkill**. No one ever say's Bobby Blitz is **Overkill**, or D.D. Verni is **Overkill**, they just say **Overkill**. Quite simple really.

Well that leads us to our next question, the Mick and Keith of Overkill, yourself and D.D.

(laughing)

I mean there's something there, what's been the key for the longevity.

Well he's got great legs! (laughing)

Well everyone knows that!

Hey, you set me up for that! (laughing) But with D.D. and I, trust is a huge issue, trust and heart when it comes down to it. I think when you press play it becomes apparent that there is trust and this is all done wholeheartedly. And if these ideas are hatched between D.D. and myself when it comes to how **Overkill** is presented, then it's brought to the band, and that's where the all for one comes into it. D.D. and I have a relationship that doesn't really last under any circumstances, let alone circumstances like this. These are the things that pull you away from home, things on presentation, how to work the band and I think it's really unique how we work. And it all comes down to trust. Very few people, there's very few people as you go through life, you can say "I fully trust this person". And between us it's a special thing, the working environment and the working situation and even friendship. It kinda transcends the fact that we're just songwriters, it goes beyond that and it say's "hey, there's some personal things here". You know my face fell off in '98, D.D. was the first guy to go "you know, look, don't worry about it, I took care of the tours, I blew the dates out. It's the first time in our careers, but that's what I did. Are you ok?, what do you need?".

Did anything positive come from being sick?

There was a great outpouring of support. Some friendships were also made even more solid because of this, D.D. and myself especially. But the thing I took most was my own mortality. This was basically my first brush with it, I don't want to go into the whole thing, but this wasn't just some little bump on my nose. This attached itself in through my sinus' and attached to my skull into my brain. It wasn't just something a little plastic surgery was going to take care of, this was way more intense and there was a hard period of six or seven days after the initial operation. But I walked out of it knowing you should really make a point of using what you have at this particular moment as opposed to making a plan. Because I was lucky up to this point to have been using this thing I have moment to moment, but this really reinforced it. It gave me a real solid, positive view on mortality.

A little more current, did the Coverkill album do what it was supposed to do?

It did more than it was supposed to do in Europe and did less than it was supposed to do here. We anticipated higher amount of sales here, but I really don't think it was everyone's cup of tea here. It was probably the first departure we had, well, where it perceived as a trend, because everyone had a cover record out

there. The only thing different is these are songs we had collected over a long, long period of time.

Bloodletting. The first record of 2000 for the band. What was some of the earliest songs completed for the album?

I'm not too sure the order they were written, I received a tape of five new tracks on a tape. The first song on the tape was "Thunderhead". The first song I completed was "What I'm Missing". But that was the second song on the tape. A lot of the songs are usually ideas that come to me. But "What I'm Missing" was completed by me in, like, two days.

How does 'Bloodletting' feel now that it's out?

Great. But I don' t think there's anything out there that we've released that we weren't 100% into at the time. Sure there's some that are more endearing than others, but that's based on how they've lasted through time. It's hard to be objective about a record, but it's a fact that 'Bloodletting' is very exciting to us right now, it's most attractive feature to the band is it's new.

Throughout your career, have you ever over thought an album?

No, not really, it never happens that way. The form a record takes is totally dictated by the songs themselves. It's usually a surprise to us. I mean sure there's a blend of us now and us then, but the natural thing is it's still us. Over the years we've collected an arsenal of weapons meaning the ways we present ourselves. But these weapons all still work. So we don't sit back and think which weapon should we use on this song or that song, we just did it. A lot of it has to do with the line up. Dave Linsk [G] has a lot to do with it. He's in there and tearing it up, that makes me think of the old days, but it's now. But it shows the value of what was and what still is, you've got to reinvent. The vibe is always created by the band, it's always **Overkill**, it just depends on the degree.

Was there any album that you were 100% into at the time of release then wasn't crazy about it later on? And vice versa?

Interesting question. Probably the record that I didn't like in time was 'Under The Influence'. This record, I felt, as time went on it just became more of an interpretation of us, the objective ear became too much. We'd hired this guy Michael Wagner to mix it and I think it was his input that I didn't see, how these songs should turn out. I simply lost sight of them. When the smoke cleared and I listened to the record, I didn't think it sounded like it should have. On the other hand, the record that grew on me the most, that I was satisfied with when we finished, but liked more and more as time went on was 'I Hear Black' it was a new era for us, still 100% OverKill, but it was definitely a new stage, one that we handled quite well if I do say so myself (laughing)!

You guys have a killer website, so it's obvious you embrace the technology, it's a long way from tape trading, huh?

It's all promotion to me and what's wrong with promotion that hits, just so many people, mindblowing amount of people per day? I think it's fantastic that we can be in people's houses on a daily basis if they so desire. And yeah, we try to keep up the board, and not just because it's time to promote. I mean I go in there and I can take the insults as well as the compliments. And we like the visibility too. I think the internet kept underground music visible during the "lean years" as well. It's also a way to promote and not having to do MTV bullshit as well. I love the presentation of it all, I get in our chat room and all that and I can take the criticism as well as the pats on the back, everyone has their own opinion on everything we do and it can be a nice way to get honest feedback.

Well I'm done, is there anything you'd like to close this with?

Thank you Tom, and the let's just say that the joy is in the journey. Thanks man, see everyone on the road...

www.wreckingcrew.com

FAILED HUMANITY

Running And Hunting And Slashing And Crushing...

Like many other interviews in this issue, Failed Humanity aren't exactly breaking new ground in the field of Death Metal. But again, like other bands in this issue, it's how they get from point A to point B that makes them worth covering. Their debut album on Candlelight Records is called* 'The Sound Of Razors Through Flesh' *and I suggest anyone who thinks Brutal Death Metal is a stagnant art to pick this up. I spoke with Drummer and Songwriter Zac O'Neil.

Midwest Metal: Since you're a new band to the majority of the scene, let's start with the beginnings of the band.

Zac O'Neil: OK, I have been in the band since, I believe, 1997. The band formed in 1994 and our Vocalist Adam [Catchpole-V] is the only original member still here. We've done two official demos, the first one was really a bit of a laugh for us these days, it was really nothing too serious. The second one was more what we were trying to do. However we didn't get signed through an official demo, it was actually through a rehearsal tape.

Now before Candlelight stepped in were you planning on releasing your own album?

Yeah, in a way we were. All we really knew is we weren't going to do another demo, we were just going to keep on writing, rehearsing with plans on recording later. They just happened to hear some of the rehearsal stuff and that was that.

Were you pretty surprised to be picked up so fast?

I was *really* surprised! I didn't think things would happen so fast. They said "We want to sign you, so go and do an album, you've got three months to prepare". And we didn't even have a full album's worth of material! So we had some stuff we'd been kicking around for quite some time, and the rest, the other half was written in a short amount of time. Looking back it's funny because we weren't really planning on trying to get such a deal so quick. There's a lot of Metal labels in England, but Candlelight seems to be picking up some good bands and we're happy to be with them.

What type of songwriting applies to Failed Humanity? Is it as a group or one on one?

Um, it's a little of both and it's not. I basically wrote about 90% of the album by myself.

So kinda like Charlie Benante! Do you write on guitar or what?

Yeah, mostly. I suppose if I wanted to I could play guitar in a band, but I'd much rather play drums. If I write music with anyone it's usually Dan [Beadle-G]. But as far as the band getting involved, what I'll do is get together the bare bones of a song, show it to Dan or Matt [Hoban-G] and I'll say "What do you think of this"? Which usually means I'll get a nonchalant response (laughs), and maybe Dan will have an idea to build off of and try to turn it into a song before we get to rehearsal. Once it's down, we'll tape it and then give it to Adam to write lyrics. We've never been a band to have lyrics first.

Coming up with 90% is a lot. Where do you get the inspiration? What bands or styles do you like?

It's hard to stay different, so the bands I like aren't necessarily actual influences. I like Cryptopsy a lot. If I hear a song by a band by them or say Nile or some one, what I'd like to do is try and top their stuff. Not like we're in competition, but if I hear something I'd like our stuff to be faster or more intense. If there's a band to be inspired by, it would be, for me Emperor.

So the songs on this album, were any of them on either of the demo's?

Actually only one, track #7 "Darkness Descends" was on our second demo. On the album it's been renamed and reworked, but that's the only one that's been around.

Coming from Ipswich, there's definitely a healthy scene. Was there some jealously being picked up by Candlelight?

Yeah a lot of green eyed monsters around. Some local people really, and like you said it's a healthy scene, especially for being such a small town there's a lot of bloody bands here. So there's a decent amount of bands who get signed and actually do something. So where you have people that do those sort of things, there's bands that don't. But to me, I'm a believer in the fact that if you're a good band, you'll get a deal, no matter where you're from.

The album is slowly making it's way into the stores, but how has the reaction from the press been?

It's been great, really. It's been a lot more positive than I imagined. All the interviews have been from America and Canada.

I can see it going over well as the style you're doing in FH is still really big in both places. Especially when it's done not only right, but a bit different.

Well I really couldn't tell you if we've done it right, but for things to have gone as far as they have, we must be doing something right.

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SUPLECS

On The Road To Somewhere

Hailing from the musical inferno known as New Orleans, Suplecs, a relative "newcomer" to the game definitely deserve their chance to shine. Their debut for Man's Ruin is titled **'Wrestlin' With My Lady Friend'** ***and it lies somewhere between an angrier Fu Manchu and Black Sabbath marriage/divorce. I spoke to Guitarist/Vocalist Durel Yates (the trio is completed by Bassist Danny Nick and Drummer Andrew Preen)***

Midwest: I don't know anything about Suplecs other than liking the album.

Durel: Have you seen us live?

Yeah, we drove to Madison, WI. The Eyehategod/Suplecs tour .

Cool, that was a killer show.

Yeah, it was a good time. OK, so this [Wrestlin'..] is your first album, what were you guys doing before, I mean demos and stuff?

Pretty much, we started the band in, late '97, early 97. Danny, who's also in Eyehategod, and I have been jamming together since we were like 16 and every time we'd get a new drummer we'd end up changing the name of the band! So we finally got a good drummer, went in a did a demo and then I moved.

Where to?

I moved to Michigan, got married and was there for about 6 months or so. I came back down here (Louisiana-ed.) to do a little "reunion" show and I never left! So my girl ended up moving back as well, finished the four track tape and sent it to Man's Ruin. And then they picked us up.

Did you do a whole shopping thing where you sent a bunch of tapes to labels?

Yeah, we sent them to Man's Ruin, The Music Cartel, Meteor City and a few more. We sent it to Man's Ruin twice actually because the first one never arrived. So I emailed them and told them to watch for it and a few weeks later [Frank, label owner] Kozik got a hold of me and asked if we'd be into doing a CD and a 10" with them. So we were like "Hell yeah"! (laughing)

Why'd you move to Michigan?

Well, my girl wanted to go to medical school and I was ready to get the hell out of New Orleans for a while. Nothing was going on at the time, so why not. But it was funny because everyone was saying "you've got to spend a few grand, make a good tape" and all that shit, we just made a four track and that was it.

When Danny started jamming in Eyehategod, were you in New Orleans or were you already in Michigan? Also did it bother you at all?

He started right before I left, or maybe a few months before, I can't really remember. It was cool. I mean we're all like inbred musicians (laughs)! Everyone jams with each other, but it opened up a few things for us for sure. I mean we did the tour with them which exposed us to a bigger crowd which we hope carries over the next time we go out. It's cool though, as long as everyone can schedule everything. I mean Jimmy's (Eyehategod) in like 20 bands (laughs)! So it's all cool.

What was it like working with Jimmy as a producer?

Well to be honest with you, he really ran out of time. What happened was, the studio we were at, their equipment broke! The analog machine wasn't calibrated right and he was getting ready to leave on tour with Crowbar. I mean we had everything worked out, he was going to spend the week before the tour working on the record, he had ideas, we had ideas and we were pretty new to the whole thing. I mean being in a big studio with someone else's money and shit. So he was there and then he had to leave. But he was cool explaining a bunch of things, what to do and what not to do.

Speaking of other people's money, how are you guys coping with the business part?

Man, I wish we had the money not to worry about stuff. I mean we're dealing with getting stuff published with ASCAP, trying to form a little corporation because of the taxes.

You guys head into the studio for album #2 soon right?

We're going to work with Dan Fortman, he's done Soilent Green, Eyehategod, Clearlight, he's good, man.

What's the new material like?

It's some of the same, some more hard edged, aggressive, it'll be cool, I'm looking forward to getting it on.

How soon until you're back on the road?

Even before the new record comes out we're doing a whole US tour with Alabama Thunderpussy and Dixie Witch, in May and then to Europe.

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Suplecs@earthlink.net
New album: 'Sad Songs...Better days' out June 2001

END IT

End it are on to something. Don't ask me what, but when I hear their six song disc, **Keep Swingin'** ***' I have a feeling they won't be unknown for too long. I recently spoke to Guitarist- Gabe***

Midwest Metal: Let's hear about the beginnings of End It.

Gabe: Well us getting together, the intention was us being the fastest, most brutal band that we could ala Nasum and The Swarm. Somewhere along the line we got Greg and Mike in the band, and soon after we decided that rockin' was a little bit more fun, so we decided to continue in our original genre while incorporating some later day Entombed as well as our older ones.

Which were?

Kreator, Old Metallica, Older Slayer, Old Testament etc. So it's developed into what we have now which is this Rock/Thrash thing.

Let's talk a little about the songwriting process.

Well when we write a song it usually becomes one of two things. It'll either be where we just jam, you know, just turn off our brains and just work. That's where some of the Rock N' Roll influences come into being. Or the other will be a song where I've got a bunch of riffs that are pretty loose to begin with, and those end up being the more Thrashy, brutal songs and that's the main two ways songs are written.

Do you prefer one method to the other? What about other forms of experimentation?

Well our theory is just try it. We'll try anyone's idea, just to make sure we're not missing anything, but on the other hand we try not to labor the songs too much. It's actually good to have a really rough draft of a song so we can expand on it later yet not beat it into the ground so we end up hating it later!

That could ruin a song.

Totally, Greg and I came from the same band and we really over thunk things way too much, so in this band we definitely don't want to do that.

Now you can tell that the Swedish Metal Scene is a big influence to End It. Not to the point of ripping them off, but it's done with just a hint. I notice you had some songs mastered by Peter at the Cutting Room in Sweden. How did that come about?

After we recorded, we sat down and said, let's all get our favorite albums and see who mastered them and let's do it. We wanted to see what someone in Sweden could do with what we're doing and we sat and argued and all that. We decided on the guy who did 'To Ride, Shoot Straight and Speak The Truth' and the Amon Amarth stuff etc. And we sent it off and liked what came back.

This six-song disc is the most current thing you have, and even now you're still recording. What's the main goal, what are you looking for?

Well we'd really like to be able to do this for a living. We'd like to be able to stick to our guns and continue playing what makes us happy. Stylistically it may change a little bit here and there, but we're all determined to keep working at this until we can reach our ultimate goal, which is to do this for a living.

End It: Greg (D), Jeff (B), Gabe (G), Mike (V)
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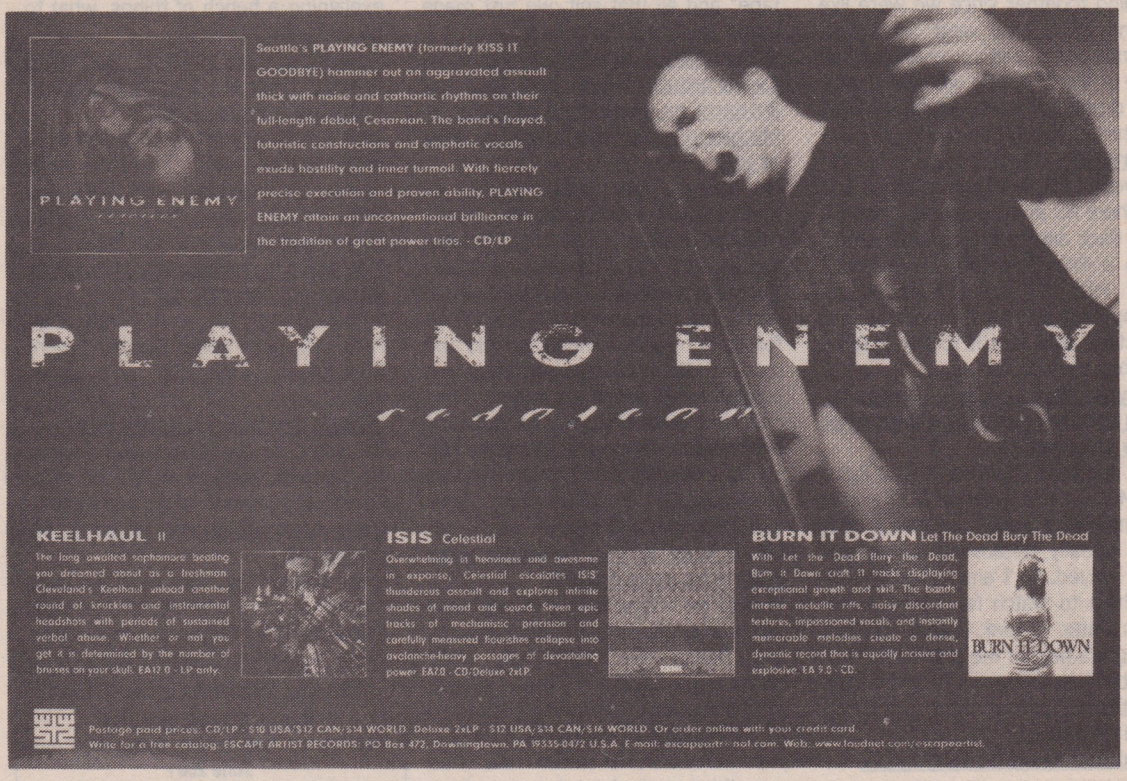
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I m m o l a t i o N

World In A World

Interview with Bassist/Vocalist Ross Dolan

MM: You know I ran into you a few weeks ago?

Ross: Oh yeah? Where at?

CBGB's for the Deathtober Fest

Oh yeah! That was a good show, great turn out, have you ever been there before?

That was my first time

So what did you think?

Well with all due respect to the history of the place, it was just kinda dumpy. Great atmosphere and of course it's legendary, but not what I expected.

Yeah, well you guys got it made there with the House Of Blues and all. That place is amazing! They treat you good, feed you, the sound is incredible, there's showers and the place just rules.

Yeah, I'm just glad they book some rather risky [for a place like that] shows. Other than that, it's limited.

That place just rules, CB's has a great PA though, that's the only thing that saves it! (Laughs)

Yeah, it sounded awesome. Well we should get started here, I suppose you've been asked this a lot. But this is the first time the fans don't have to wait years and years for a new Immolation LP!

Well this was a conscious effort, no doubt. Well 'Failures For Gods' would've been out a lot sooner, but there was a delay with that and it was mainly the artwork. There was about a year where we sat on the album and it just ruined the momentum. So for this one, as soon as we finished the Six Feet Under tour in February, we booked time in June. Which worked out good because we're the type of band who work better with a deadline, if there's no deadline we'll putz around with things. So went to Millbrook where we've done the last few, said to ourselves, "have it done by June and out before the end of the year". So it was key for us because we've always been out own worst enemy with time.

You guys have always had some real good tours to support the albums. How did the tours for 'Failures For Gods' go?

Well we've been very lucky throughout the years. Back when 'Here In After' came out we did the Six Feet Under tour with Internal Bleeding, later that year we also toured with Cannibal Corpse. I mean what more could anyone ask for? They [CC] did everything they could to make it happen and it did. They're always going out of their way to help bands out, that's for sure. When 'Failures...' came out we did one tour on our own here, which was kinda cool. It was our first time doing a headline thing since the first album came out in '92. Then we went to Europe and did 15 dates headlining, which was really important for us to do. Then we did the Six Feet Under tour, which came up last minute, but seeing that we get along with them so well it was no problem.

You guys had John McEntee from Incantation filling in for Tom Wilkinson for the [Failures...] tours. What's the situation for the upcoming road work?

Well Tom has his own company, we all work together, which is why we can hold down full time jobs and still leave for four months out of the year! (laughs) But in the past, he's had a partner and he was able to tour, but he's employing like twenty guys so he's not able to just pack up and go anymore. Believe me, he wants nothing more than to be able to tour, but until we have the answers financially, it can't be like that. With all he contributes to the band and seeing that we've been together for twelve years we wish it were different.

With four albums worth of material is making a set list harder than ever?

Yeah, pretty much. Right now we've been rehearsing the whole new album. It looks like it'll be most of the new one, a few from both 'Failures...' and 'Here In After' and two or three old, old ones. Even though there's always gonna be the kids that want to hear the super old stuff, we understand that, but at the same time we don't want to be one of those bands who rely only on old stuff. We're really happy with the new album and we want to push the shit out of it! But as far as a set list, you never know. I'm sure the first tour will be mostly newer stuff and then we'll see.

Lyrically, the album is still 100% Immolation, but the ones on the new album seem a bit more personal and direct. Was that planned?

We all enjoy what we write, lyrically. This is both as a band as well as individually. So that's something we all click on, we all contribute lyrics and I think when you read them you can tell that they're not something just thrown together. As far as you mentioning them being more personal and direct, glad you caught that. That was intentional. Tom has a lot to do with the lyrics and concepts, he and I work well together and that helps a lot. And going back to when I said we all contributed to the lyrics made it more personal, even Bob [Vigna-G] helped with some lyrics. So even stuff we've been writing for the next album have been in the same vein. But on this album the titles speak for themselves, if you read them you'll pretty much

have an inkling of what the song is about.

What was the first song written for the new album?

It was "Fall From A High Place". That's a cool question because it's got me thinking this. All the first songs written from our records is usually the most intricate. Intricate or just weirdly timed (laughs). From 'Here In After' the song "Away From God" was pretty whacked out as well!

But we tried to make a more straightforward album, we've succeeded in some respects, but then there's still the typical **Immolation** left turns here and there.

I'm always interested in life outside the band. How are things going, obviously there's work and all that?

I tell you, this band, it's a passion of ours. We've sacrificed so much over these past twelve years and it hasn't stopped. You've got to alter your life, like I said we're not able to make a living off this, but it for the love of the music and the love of playing live, recording, writing. But it effects every part of your life, your personal life because you're always rehearsing or touring or laying out cash for this, cash for that and that cash has to come from somewhere, ya know?

I suppose a rehearsal room is money too?

Well right now we're very fortunate because Tom has a house where we practice at. If we had to rent a room, a small room is over $600. Or there's hourly rooms where they have all the equipment, but those are a pain and they're $20 an hour. A lot of people think "Wow, they've got four albums out, they're on tour this and that", it ain't like that. The realities are rough, man. But the people don't want to see that shit either, they're there for the music, not the drama! But we are lucky because paying for a room is like having another rent and one's bad enough!

Now this is Alex's [Hernandez-D] second full length with the band, obviously he's the man for the gig, but going back was there a weird period weather or not he was going to make it?

Back when we asked Craig to leave the band, I mean we were just so fed up with his attitude, so we knew we had to get someone. We knew we'd find someone better, but as usual, it was just a matter of time. We didn't really have to look too far because the first person we had in mind was Alex. We'd played some shows with his former band Fallen Christ. And although his style was totally different, we knew the potential was there because he was such a solid drummer. So one night we saw him and told him we needed a drummer and that it was a full time thing. At the time he was in like three or so bands, he was in Fallen Christ, Disassociate and another band. But those bands were all that Death/GrindCore style, so he had to learn our style. It took some time, there were a few things he really didn't get, but he had the heart and total determination to keep trying to get better and that's what happened. I think on this album, you can finally see Alex becoming part of our style, while re-inventing our style at the same time (laughs)! He does some really cool shit, little nuances and what he does with his cymbals it's really something cool.

As a fan of drummers it's been a cool thing to watch his progression. I remember on the 'Here In After' tour, paying close attention to his playing and while it was there, you could tell it was something he was going to have to build towards.

Oh yeah, those were tough tours at first, trust me. He was just not 100% used to our style and that can be rough for any musician. For the first Six Feet Under tour he had like two or three weeks to learn all the songs, so yeah, it took some time.

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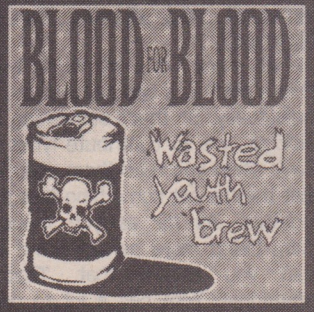

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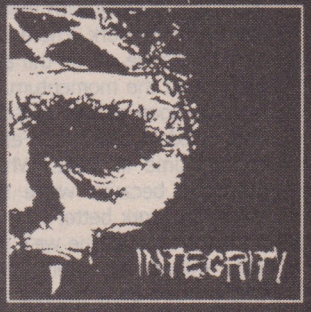

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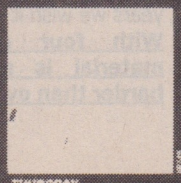

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Midwest: Reading over the one sheet that came with the album, it said something to the effect of treating 'As Heaven Turns To Ash' as your debut release, even though there have been other WarHorse releases.

Mike: Well, it's not as important to treat it as the first release, but it's definitely the best representation of what we've been trying to do for years. We've had a lot of line up problems; ya know where we'd get going with some momentum and then fall apart. This album is a realization of all the years of trying. It's the first release where we finally sound the way we should.

Now other than checking out the bands site, I have no idea what the earlier stuff sounded like. How would you describe it?

The earlier stuff was us trying to find out what we wanted to do. We all came from Death Metal, back in the hey day of 90-91 etc. We were all playing DM, it was all starting to get big and as you know all the sound a likes started taking over at the same time. It got crowded fast and even though we'd been doing DM for about 4-5 years, we just got burnt out on it.

How would you describe the Death Metal you were doing?

AUTOPSY! They were our number one band. Man, they were the ultimate! Other than them, Entombed, the first Grave album, Bolt Thrower, early Incantation, but it all comes back to Autopsy.

How far did it go?

Well Jerry (Orne, Bass/Vox) was in this band Desolate, and actually Todd (Laskowski, Guitar) was in a band called Rancid Christ and ended up in Desolate towards the end of that band, and they were a Black, Grind, it was just sick! It was like Vital Remains meets Emperor meets Dismember, it was nuts. I mean they were smoking everyone. But nobody was getting anywhere. It probably didn't help that we were all in our own little scene's, I mean, we weren't part of the big Boston scene. At the time I was Infestation with Mike who later went on to Cryptopsy, and we were doing pretty well. We'd had two demos out, but the labels just weren't biting. So it just disintegrated. We broke up, I wanted to go in more of a Doom style, slower with increased feeling. So, I wasn't doing too much when Jeff called and said they were putting a band together, ya know, doing Sabbath styled stuff, they had a female singer and I went down and was blown away.

Sounds good so far, how long did it last?

Well we had Krista singing and our style at the time was a bit cleaner. Kinda like a cleaner Crowbar, Sleep (big influence) Eyehategod, etc. But with the female, it was kind of more Rock, less sick. And at the time, there was no "stoner rock" label going around. I mean I knew of Kyuss, Monster Magnet but they [Kyuss] weren't labeled until they broke up! So we weren't thinking along the lines of anything, we just knew what we were into at the time. It was going good, she was in college and soon after it started to get weird. I mean she couldn't tour, that was out of the question, so we decided to end it. Not a bad split, but we were bummed. Then we got this kid Matt, he was a bit sicker and with him the direction shifted.

Not that I have any idea what the band sounded like, but I'm glad it didn't turn into a Fu Manchu band. They're way too fucking happy!

Yeah, I like dynamics. I like it to be more involved instead of the straight ahead shit. Sleep meets Zeppelin more than Sleep meets AC/DC! So we decided to fuck with people, make it like Floyd, Neurosis and...

And fuck with people you do! I mean "Amber Vial", I've never heard anything so clean be so damn heavy!

You need the "mellow" shit to make the heavier stuff that much heavier. Most people don't get that!

Have people commented that it sounds like a heavier "The End" by the Doors?

Oh yeah! That's pretty much where it came from. It was an accident. We were just jamming one night and Todd's like "check this out", and that was it. The acoustic stuff on the record weren't really planned out too much. I mean Todd would have a riff, we'd get fucked up and jam on it.

Sorry to throw ya off, but Matt was joining the band.

So he's in now. And while he wasn't exactly what we were looking for, he wasn't as heavy, but he was way experimental, which was cool. He'd be bringing down bottleneck slides, crazy pedals and all this stuff. He was into noise stuff, but he also liked Sleep and some Death Metal, so we had some common influences, but there was weird shit we never got. So when we were jamming with him we'd come up with "Lysergic Communion" and just go off knowing the clean thing didn't really work, so do the opposite. I was thinking a little Neurosis, but not so mechanical. The problems were for instance, when it was time to do a heavy part, well, that's what I wanted! And he'd [Matt] be fooling around with some delay shit and all that, which was cool, but not what I wanted. So we did a 7" and decided to put together a little tour. We figured we'd do a week up and down the East Coast and finish up at the first Metal/Hardcore Fest at home. So what happens? He pusses out on us! The night before we're supposed to leave, I guess his girlfriend didn't want him going or something. But he say's "I'll do the Metal Fest". We didn't speak to him that whole week, showed up at the

fest, didn't even talk before we went on, played one song that lasted like 25 minutes, that was that. There was so much tension, and that's probably what made it so good. And while it was good, it was basically the end of that era with Matt, but the crowd dug it. So that was that. And around then we remembered Todd, we knew he could play, had good influences, so we invited him down, did two songs and that was the sound FINALLY! Finally we could blend what we were doing with the Entombed, the Frost, the Autopsy, the sick stuff, but with the dynamics. So after working at it for so long, we're now here.

So the Mass Metal/Hardcore was in 1999, so the three of you have been working on this formula for a year solid?

Yeah, right after the fest, which was May, we were scheduled to do the Stoner Hands of Doom Fest in August. So we had two months to get ready and show him everything we'd been working on. The S.H.O.D. fest was his first show with us.

So that was the year Trouble played, as well as Clearlight etc.

Yeah, we actually did a pre show party the night before in D.C. at a club and we played the next morning, we were the first band on! We were totally psyched, we're like "man Hendrix was the first band at Woodstock!" I mean there was hardly anyone there, we were all hung over with an hour of sleep. We were still fucked up from the night, I mean we played at like 2 in the morning in D.C., so we went on at 9am still wrecked. A little later in the day the place turned into a hellhole when the tornado hit! Then it was moved indoors. But I got to see Spirit Caravan, Trouble, Clearlight.

Something I just heard and will probably be over by the time this publishes, but you guys are going out with Electric Wizard.

Fuck yeah, we're going out with Electric Wizard! The whole thing with touring, we want to, but it's got to be done right. The only bands we wanted to tour with were Goatsnake or Electric Wizard, that's it. I mean we'd also leave in a minute to go out with High On Fire or Eyehategod, but we're really psyched for this. I was talking to Greg (Anderson-Southern Lord himself) and I told him we're into touring, but it's got to be something good, especially because of the job situation, we've all got jobs we want to keep. If this was five years ago, we'd be gone, just living in our van and shit. But it's a different story nowadays.

Do you guys having to quit your jobs to tour?

No. We're all pretty stable where we work, we're giving enough notice, so it's a relief to have a job when we get back, you know maintain some sort of income.

And on the road all the "money" from the shows goes into getting to the next and all that shit.

Yeah, all 6 of us and a tour manager, if we can find one, all are going in our van.

Is it pretty dependable?

Yeah, it's a good van. So we're set there all we have to do is rent a trailer and we're good to go. We're doing close to thirty shows, which we have to do, they're coming from England and there's no point in doing five gigs ya know? Plus it's expensive for them to get here, we're hoping they have their own guitars, they're using our gear, that gear's gonna be hurtin' (laughs)!

So things are finally lookin' up?

Yeah, we're real proud of the record, Greg's been super cool as well, he's one of the first people who's been seriously behind the band. I'd sent him the first CD, and let him know it was a bit old and the style we were currently doing was sicker and all that. He liked the music, didn't really care for the vocals. And that was kinda the feel from a lot of people, they dug what we were playing, but not the vocals. It's funny because when I heard Goatsnake, that's what I wanted [to sound like]! I wanted Goatsnake music with a female Glenn Danzig singing (laughs)! So we kept in touch with Greg, sent him a 7", he dug it, we later sent a rehearsal tape and that was it.

I flipped out when I first heard the album, I can see why he wanted to put it out.

Well, as with a lot of bands, we just put something out that we wanted to hear, I mean you hope people like it, but we know that this music ain't hip or whatever, it's just what we wanted to hear.

You mentioned before we started the tape rolling that the response has been very strong, right?

Yeah, it's been amazing.

I think the big test will be when you're able to bring it to the people, those are the people who matter, ya know? FUCK THE CRITICS.

Man, I'll take one fan throwing an email saying they dig it over ten journalists. Any day. But at the same time, I've spoken to so many people who have been real supportive of what we're doing. I didn't expect it at all! I hear a lot of stories about the Metal press getting a bad rap, maybe being a bit too "elitist" and all that shit, and I was like "I'm not sure if I want to deal with this shit". Especially after having done the Death Metal band press stuff. But everyone's been very cool and it makes us feel good, I think anything that you put your heart into, it's a good feeling to have people like it.

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CATASTROPHIC

THE CLEANSING BEGINS...

Speaking to Trevor Peres is almost like therapy. Despite creating some of the heaviest Death Metal known to man for over 12 years (first in Xecutioner who later changed their name to Obituary, and currently Catastrophic) the man remains as cool as the day is long. I tried to focus on the present, even though I have many, many questions concerning his former band, those will have to wait. Check out 'The Cleansing' out on Metal Blade now.

Midwest Metal: We'd heard the name for some time, you guys played Milwaukee Metal Fest last year, when exactly did everything come together?

Trevor Peres: Well it all started with Keith and I when I first started sending him some songs, which was mid-to-late 1998. But I guess the original start to him and I working together was when he did some live dates with Obituary [replacing John Tardy for a short while] in late 1997. So we hit it off as friends and talked about putting something together. About a ½ year later I sent him a tape, it had a drum machine, bass and no leads, so I sent it. He got it, liked it, put some vocals to it and I was like "Hell Yeah"! So that was the initial spark, then it was just finding people to do it. We started asking people we knew, some were into it, some weren't. And I wanted people who were 100% into it, right from the start, people who wanted to do this. So Keith knew a few friends who he jammed with in Pyrexia, who weren't doing much at the time, so he invited them to come by when I was in town. So I went to NY and jammed with Chris [Basile-D] and Rob [Maresca-G] and we all hit it off.

Now the demo was recorded as a four piece right?

Yeah, we did the demo with me playing bass on two songs and Chris playing bass on one. And we started shopping that. But around the same time they started talking about Brian [Hobbie-B], they said he was totally cool and totally into music and that's what we needed.

Now with 4/5 of the band in NY are you still in Florida?

Well I was born and raised in Florida, and the past couple of years I've been out of Florida, just experimenting in different areas for fun. But I was in Atlanta at the time I sent the original tape to Keith. So when it really got serious I was in the process of moving to Tennessee, which is where I'm at now. So I'll go up to Long Island every few months for a couple weeks, when we were getting ready to record, we jammed everyday for about two and a half weeks straight. So that's how it works, it's been cool, I get some cheap flights up there and it's been cool.

I'm guessing there's still lots of tape trading?

Yeah, but also I'll record something on my four-track and make an Mp3 and email it to them. So when I go there they already know the stuff. Check this out, a few times we've used Net meeting to jam!

You're kidding right?

No, they'd call me up and they could hear me talk when we weren't jamming, but they couldn't hear my guitar. So they'd start the song and there's about a two second delay, but I could play along and it was cool. Kinda funny,

the four of them in NY, but it worked, we call it the fifth room.

Now the first thing I noticed from the album is the guitar tone. That's the signature Obituary tone. Was it planned that that tone would act as the foundation of Catastrophic?

No. It was just me trying to come up with some heavy stuff. Keith knew that as well, he just wanted me to plug in and play. There was never a question, that's my sound! And you know all my songs on this album probably could've been on the next Obituary album, if we ever did one!

That brings up a point, how did Metal Blade come about, were you or were you not still obligated to Roadrunner?

Yeah, and I still am, too. It's just that Roadrunner weren't interested in developing a new heavy band. They liked it and all, but just weren't interested. I mean they still want Obituary albums, that's why they put out the 'Anthology' thing, so I was a bit bummed. But at the same time I was kinda excited to work with Metal Blade because the people are so behind the album. That's the way the guys in the band are too. I mean when a show comes through, the guys are out there fliering, promoting the band, the website. We try to use the site to our advantage. I mean for a band who's only played four shows and at the time without any label or coverage in magazines, we were doing pretty well. Just letting everyone check out the music and we just gave our demo out for free.

I know you do a lot of graphic design stuff on your own and are involved with the net. How do you think it'll progress?

Well, one thing that I can't stand is how you have to go to the store to buy certain things. I mean I'd rather buy things off the internet, have it shipped to my door and never have to leave my house. No stress factor, just do it. That and the information is just incredible. Anything you want, news, music etc. No middle man. It rules!!

WWW.CATASTROPHIC.ORG

CIANIDE

Armed To The Teeth

Like a decorated war torn battle tank, Chicago's Cianide have had their share of victories and defeats. Yet year in, year out they continue to fight the only fight they know, the fight for Metal. With the release of their latest LP, 'Divide And Conquer', for Merciless Records I spoke to Founder/Guitarist Scott Carrol and Co-Founder/Bassist/Vocalist Mike Perun about their past and present at the front lines of war.

Midwest Metal: Even though you've been around for a long time, this will be somewhat of an introduction to most, so take us to the beginnings of the band.

Scott Carrol: Well it all starts in, like 1987 with me buying a guitar and a friend of mine named Bill. We'd always be listening to Metal and thought let's put a band together. Our favorite bands at the time, and to this day, were Hellhammer, Venom, Slaughter and we thought, we could do this, so we picked the name **Cianide** and it was him and I, he was singing at the time, so it was a singer and a guitarist trying to write songs, just figuring out what we wanted to do. In 1988 we met Mike.

Mike Perun: We met at a Suicidal Tendencies/Motorhead show at The Riviera. They picked me out of a crowd because I had a Postmortem sticker on my jacket.

SC: Which was another band that we fucking loved. And it wasn't even a sticker, it was a homemade patch (laughing)! So we instantly hit it off with Mike and lo and behold he tells us he plays Bass. So we didn't get together though until some time later, we just started, like, writing letters back and forth, tape trading and all that.

MP: Yeah, we did a lot of tape trading at first, none of us, although we all lived in Chicago, had cars to get around.

SC: So from tapes, we became friends and we just wanted to find a drummer and see what would happen, let's do this for real sort of thing. We placed ad's for drummers and Bill and I met a drummer at the At War, Whiplash, Sindrome show at Rock On Chicago. His name was Jeff and he was a fucking acid freak from Indiana, this guy was insane, but he played drums, so we were like, cool. So we brought all our shit to his place in Whiting, Indiana, or Whitetrash Indiana as it came to be known, we had a tune called "Dead"...

MP: We thought we were the heaviest thing since Hellhammer.

SC: We played the one song and were just blown away. We thought "this is awesome" and that we *were* heavier than Hellhammer!

MP: Just finishing that first song was such an incredible feeling, it was awesome.

SC: We then proceeded to get totally drunk and listen to the song like one thousand times (laughing), it was just a feeling of being Metalheads and finally being able to create our own Metal music. I still have that tape and it's weird because the music is comperable to what we're still doing. It was doomy, heavy it was what we wanted to be. It was taking the slow, heavy parts of Hellhammer, Frost. We jammed with Jeff for about a full Summer, we went to Indiana every weekend, picking up beer, picking up our singer and heading out there.

MP: That was one of the best times of my life, by the way. Just jamming.

SC: We got rid of him [Jeff], we had four songs and the traveling was too much. Our next step was a guy named Carlos, we recorded the 'Funeral' demo with him. We also added Jim on Guitar. From there we had a lot of member changes and it gets a bit confusing. But we had a demo that was unreleaseable because our singer wasn't working out. I had to kick him out, he was my best friend at the time, but he had to go. So we had this tape with no vocals. Before we kicked Bill out we had Bill, Jim, Mike and me. Mike knew a guitarist from his neighborhood who was jamming with a drummer. So we kick Jim out just so we can jam with this drummer (laughing)! That's how desperate we were.

MP: We still have the 'Funeral' demo and a friend of mine had a four track and I said Fuck it, I'll do the vocals. I'd never sang before, but it needed to be done.

SC: So we finally put the demo out, with the vocals we wanted and that was really the start of **Cianide**. We got great feedback and that was cool.

MP: It put us on the map.

SC: From there we went through more drummer problems, then we found Jeff Kabela, I bought a four track and started working on 'The Dying Truth' demo.

MP: Of all the line up's past and present there's never been one that clicked like Scott, Jeff and myself. He was a dick like us and he had muscle to back up our smart mouths at the bar, so that was a plus.

SC: So we recorded 'The Dying Truth' demo, played some shows and started sending out the tape and at the same time we met The Dead Youth, so we clicked instantly, they got signed to Grindcore and we thought kick ass. So they gave our stuff to Grindcore and the label liked it, we met them and signed. Simple as that, we hardly even read the contract, we just signed.

How would you describe the Grindcore years?

SC: They were inexperienced, we were inexperienced. If we were able to grow together it could've been cool. Our first album, 'The Dying Truth', I mean we'd never been in a studio before. We went in and just played, we played the whole thing live. If it was out of time, if it was sloppy, whatever, we just did it.

MP: We did everything in one take.

SC: We were happy, it sounded cool, we laid out the package and that's where problems started. We had the album laid out a certain way, same way with the track order. When we recorded the songs, we recorded whatever we felt like like doing at the time, we weren't following any specific order. In our heads we had in mind a certain flow. So they sent it off and had it mastered in that bullshit way. So it gave the album a weird feel, but at least it was heavy, that's what we cared about. But I got turned down by them when it came to my suggestions and that was the beginning of the problems, I spoke to the man in charge and he said it sounded great to him, as is. The album came out, Death Metal was at it's peak and it did good.

MP: That's the album, to this day, everybody knows by us.

Now for the follow up, 'A Descent Into Hell' things had somewhat changed, right?

SC: Yeah, we knew the album did good just due to all the mail we got. I mean we got tons and we told them we wanted to go to Chicago Trax.

Looking back would you have gone there, maybe taken the money and either pocketed it or used it to tour?

MP: Yeah. I'd still go there today.

SC: Well in hindsight taking some money would've been cool, but you've got to understand, we still didn't really know what we sounded like. Even though we did one record, and demoed new material for the second one, we thought we'd take that sound we got from the demo and go to a pro place and that's what we'd get. We knew we'd be in bigger debt to the label, but we didn't care.

MP: At that time we knew we were getting fucked on royalties, so we thought we could fuck them back by going to that studio. At one point we got a lawyer to look at our situation and he said we signed a ditch deal and we'd never see shit. So we made a decision, 'The Dying Truth' sold close to 10,000 copies, which isn't a lot, but it's a good start.

So how long after the album is out does the label fold?

SC: Maybe six months.

MP: We figured we were a big tax write off at the end because of the money they spent on the album. Chicago Trax was $150 an hour and just look at the packaging of the album, they were spending a lot.

SC: No matter what, we got a big sound, we got the sound we were looking for, it sounded heavy as fuck and we were pretty happy. But like I said six months later.

MP: We knew that the record hadn't even gotten out in that time. We were expecting the same kind of response that the first album got and there was none!

SC: We knew it killed the first album, but again, what can you do? Carry on, that's all you can do when that happens. Start writing again.

From there you released the 'Rage War' demo which led to 'Death, Doom and Destruction' for Lost Horizon. How did that deal come about?

SC: That was just a deal between Metal brothers.

MP: We were ready to do another album, Warren and Ken from Lost Horizon were starting a new label, and they said to us it'd be a good kick in the ass for us to be their first release. They offered to pay for everything, and what more could we want? It's total cult release

SC: It's another record. We had a lot of down time, but it proved we never went anywhere, we just kept going and friends of Metal put it out which made it even cooler. People who knew about the band, they knew it was out. It proved we still had this hunger to get it out, we still share this creativity between us to do whatever it takes.

There was a bit more time from 'DDD' and signing to Merciless.

SC: We did the single, which was somewhat planned. We knew we wouldn't be totally ready to record a new full length, but it was a good gap release. The songs were recorded the same time as 'DDD', so it worked out. The promo was sent to labels and we got some interest from Osmose. He (Herve) liked the faster stuff, was iffy on the slower stuff so we thought, let's just get him three more songs. But we totally fucked that up by getting lazy, drinking too much, all the time. It took us a year to write and record the three tracks. We sent it to him a year later and the recording sounded like shit and, like I said, we blew it.

MP: John from Scepter told us to send a copy of the songs to Merciless. We cleaned up the bad sound and sent it off to Volker and that's where we're at.

SC: Volker liked what he heard and that was a good feeling. The first thing he told us was he loved 'Death Doom and Destruction' and wanted to re-release it on vinyl. Which we were into, we got a bunch of those, gave some to Warren and Ken. We feel at home with Merciless.

MP: It's a small, respectable underground label and we're an underground band. And we know this. We don't get big features or reviews in big mags, and if we do, it's not going to be good (laughs)!

SC: You know, I don't have these big hopes and dreams of selling millions of records. I had one dream coming up, and it was to do a record. We've done four albums.

MP: We're on cloud nine. **Cianide** have accomplished way more than we ever planned on. When I got the 'DDD' vinyls in the mail, I was fucking shaking, that was my dream, seeing something I created on vinyl, that was my dream.

SC: I don't care about bringing the music to the people, everything is for us. Give us money so we can record for us.

Why should people buy 'Divide And Conquer'?

SC: Because it kicks ass in a very Heavy Metal way.

MP: It's raw, brutal, in your face Death Metal, the way it should be played. I don't care if you like Gorguts or Cannibal Corpse, this is the way Death Metal, the way I remember it being played by Terrorizer, Master, Deathstrike, Frost, Slaughter, Hellhammer that's Death Metal. We still haven't heard the heaviest, fastest, most brutal song yet and we're gonna try our shot at recording it. We probably won't nail it, but we still want to give it our all.

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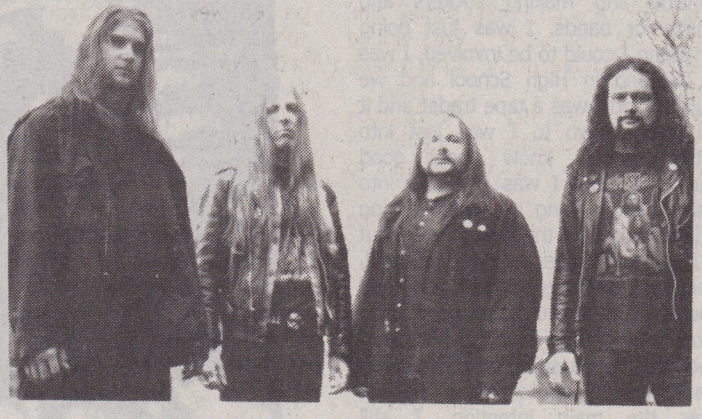

RELAPSE RECORDS

Leaders Not Followers

This was interesting. To coincide with the release of the* 'Contaminated 3.0' *double CD, Relapse Head Honcho Matt Jacobsen decided to open himself up to press interviews. Not that he's ever refused to do such things, but like any of his bands promoting their own releases, Jacobsen decided to speak about just what he and his company have stood for, for over 10 years. Here's our conversation...

Midwest Metal: So have you been at this all day?

Matt Jacobsen: Yeah, since 9:00 this morning, but it's been great!

Cool, where I want to start is growing up, which record labels did you look up to?

Well as a fan, say in High School, I was most interested in were Combat, Metal Blade, Megaforce and then later on Earache and Peaceville. On a smaller note, when I started the label I was living in Denver and I was encouraged by, well not directly, but there was a guy named Bob Rob who did all the Hardcore shows and also had his own little 7" label called Doughnut Crew Records. So I figured "If this guy could do it, maybe so can I". So one day I just called him and said, "Hey, how do you make a record"? And he directed me towards a guy in the phone book and **Relapse Records** was born.

But obviously this, as it stands today, was not what you had in mind!

No, not at all. I started doing a fanzine and making stickers and shirts for bands. I was just doing anything I could to be involved. I was in a band in High School and we sucked and I was a tape trader and it all came down to I was just into letting people know about good music. I mean I was just way into calling and writing to people asking "Have you heard the new..."? So I put out a 7" of my friends Hardcore band, then a 7" of a friend's Punk band and then because of all the people I knew from tape trading and the fanzine, I thought maybe some of these other bands would want to do a 7". So that was the main intention. I still remember the moment of sitting in my partner's basement, my partner being Bill Yurkiewicz, it was about a year after it all started and I was psyched because good things were happening. So at that moment, I was thinking how this has all gone better than I thought it would and maybe there's no ceiling to what could be accomplished.

Over the years, in your mind, how many times have you "quit"?

Ah, there's been times. I mean it's such a mixed bag, even when everything's fucked there's the good and vice versa! But there's only been a few times when it's seriously crossed my mind, and even then it's only been for a day. But it's not easy, sometimes it takes the fun of it being music and a record label, I mean it's still a business, and the responsibility of having 20+ employees and health insurance, payroll, taxes, accountants and lawyers it can be a lot!

I wanted to focus on that for a minute. Sooner than later, especially in your case, you had to jump up to being an actual business with all the business aspects. But when it started to become more than fun, who did you look to for help?

Well in the very, very beginning when I set out to make my first contract, my Father is a General Attorney by law, just regular kind of stuff. So he wasn't very involved, he wasn't too supportive of the music too much then, so he told me that if I wanted a contract, just to make a letter and say it's a letter agreement. And that made sense, and from there it was a lot of common sense. I then read a book called The Business of Music, and hardly any of it made any sense to me. So jump to a year later and we had a problem with out one computer we had. So I had to call a computer guy out to fix it. So he's there and he looks around and say's "What the hell do you guys do here"? So I started telling him what we did, and he asks if we had an accountant. I said "No", so the computer guy said you should call this customer of mine. I call him up, he's a CPA and was just getting started on his own, so he started working with us and really helped guide us when things got going. I mean when we started bringing on employees and had to register with the state and social security, he helped. So later when things are picking up we decided to become a corporation and we got a business attorney and it was awesome. Especially seeing that

these people saw what we were doing and it was totally outside the norm of what they were used to dealing with, but they were helpful and supportive then and still are to this day.

A huge part of Relapse then and now has always been mail order. Even when you guys first started and there were only thirty titles, there were ad's supporting it. Was it your idea or Bills to really capitalize on bringing the music to the people?

That was really a common sense thing. I think a lot of the things Relapse has done, weather they seem innovative or whatever, it's because we were there and thought "why isn't anyone else doing this"? The mail order thing, we used to go to shows in Pennsauken, NJ. And this place was called Gee Willikers, it's where the underground shows were held, so we'd go there and we'd sell records out the trunk of our car. Imports and whatever else we had. At the same time we were trading with Nuclear Blast in Germany, just getting our stuff out and about. Just the other day I found out first mail order catalog, it was one piece of paper, one side had three columns and the other side had a letter to the people and a play list of the three people in the company.

The other thing that sets the label apart, and this is not kissing ass, because the people that deal with me more than once a year know I feel this way. But Relapse and advertising, simply go hand in hand, there is no substitution!

Wow, I'm glad people actually notice that. I guess as strange as people may think of this, but Relapse is my creative output. I mean be it the aesthetic side, or the way things look or are presented down to business and marketing, I get totally psyched to have an idea. Better yet is when other people come to me with the idea and we're able to work on it. I'm really glad yourself and a few other people have mentioned that. From the very beginning when we had absolutely no money, I always wanted our stuff to look killer. I remember one point when we'd gotten a few thousand dollars saved, and this was before it was common, but the first thing I did was buy a scanner and a laser printer! So early on I was doing all the graphic design for the 7"s and I wasn't a designer, but I had an idea what I wanted. Even in my job today, one of my favorite things is being involved in the graphics. We've got great graphic designers who I totally trust, but I still go in there and suggest things here and there. Part of the reason I chose the name **Relapse**, was because I wanted something that was simple, easy to remember ya know Relapse Records had a nice ring to it. But most importantly I didn't want it to be limiting. At the time I wasn't thinking about the future, but in the back of my mind that was me marketing the name.

You touched on this, but the presentation and packaging, as a fan, just cannot be fucked with. I think any label that puts out quality packaging shows that there's fans behind it all.

Totally. I think along the same lines is our presence at the Metal Fests.

You beat me to that one!

Ha Ha! It's true though. I think the second Metal fest we were involved in, someone came up to me and said something to the effect of "It's like you own this Fest". But you have to be there to really realize the effect of it all. I mean any Metal label could've hung huge ass banners, sponsored a stage and all that. We were there and figured "why not"?

I was going to ask this, you guys were the first to take that direct approach with the Metal Fest. And everyone knows the series is the greatest show on Earth as well as, at times, the worst show on Earth. You were putting your company's reputation on the line as well.

But the show has gotten better!

Sure, but on your part, early on, it took some work to really make an impact.

Yeah, exactly. Early on I went to Jack [Koshick] and said "here's who we are, this is what we do mail order wise, this is our mailing list" you know the people that we're reaching on our own, let us help you reach these people. It was going to take a lot to get it so it was beneficial to both though.

Well I remember the first year of the Relapse Stage [1998]. As I was walking up to the door, I ran into Gordon [Conrad-Relapse Promotions] and he was handing out schedules with all the updated changes from an hour before! That was a huge difference right there!

Well you know from all the years of attending, no one ever had a schedule printed out! I mean, come on! Then when schedules existed, they were always fucked up. So we brought a disc with us, waited until the last possible minute, ran to Kinko's or wherever and had them printed up. It's a hands on attitude that not only myself, but everyone at **Relapse** wants to make the impact. So we were the first ones to do such things, but it's only because we were there. But we were always trying to be a part of whatever event was happening. We'd set up at the Michigan Death Fests, before that the Fleet Fest of Freaks in Rhode Island, and we also did our own Nuclear Festival in Maryland. All these fests, there wasn't labels set up selling their stuff. Now you go and how many are there?

Well nowadays, you HAVE to be there, I mean if you're serious about the business.

Totally! But the fests are way more important because you can meet and deal with the fans instead of just dealing with industry schmucks!

Now every label has bands that seem to identify the label. For instance, Sepultura=Roadrunner and Entombed/Morbid Angel= Earache and all that. What bands do you think of when people say Relapse?

Well there's always going to be the classic Relapse bands like Amorphis, Deceased and Mortician. And in more recent times, standouts have been bands would have to be Nile and Dillinger Escape Plan.

Earlier you mentioned the name and how you came up with Relapse, and the fact that it was a name that could be applied to a broad spectrum of music. Was the noise stuff planned from the start?

Well as a fan I've always been interested in all kinds of music, and in the beginning, we just worked with whatever we could. You have to remember when we first started we were nobodies and no one wanted to work with us. So our very early releases like Candiru and the first Dead World record, which were more like demos than actual albums, but it was what we could get. But when we were able to expand and build the reputation, we were able to up the quality and the ante of what we were doing. So Death Metal was our start, that's what people were sending us,

demos and such, but being able to expand was always in our minds. I think one of the big bands that made people realize that we were more than a Death Metal label is Neurosis. That opened a lot of doors for us. They are highly respected in the Punk and alternative community. Unsane, Today Is The Day, Coalesce, Dillinger have helped further that. Don't get me wrong, we're still going to put out the brutal stuff, though we're gonna continue push the envelope, say with a band like Amorphis who may have developed past the core Relapse once was. I mean we just put out the new Regurgitate!

How about the Nuclear Blast deal a few years ago? It helped both parties for sure, what positives came out of that deal?

Man, there were many positives! In the beginning we (staff-ed.) were big fans of their stuff, Dismember, Pungent Stench, Disharmonic Orchestra just a ton of bands who were brutal as well as cutting edge. So they [NB] needed someone to open a Nuclear Blast office to do promotion, marketing and production. So we wanted to get our stuff out and about there in Europe. They wanted to license the Suffocation album ('Human Waste'-Ed.) so it was a mutual thing. And it was great because NB came out the same way we did, NB was formed in Markus' basement so on and so forth and even though we were just two kids with a few 7" releases and no experience, Nuclear Blast trusted us to do it. And it got our foot in the door with distributors, and even though all our bands were basically "new", they received the same attention as the established NB bands. So our bands like Deceased, Incantation and Mortician did very well with the deal because they had strong underground followings. And we were promoting their bands real well, we couldn't get people on the phone for interviews saying "we have the new Monastat 7", but we could get people interested in Pungent Stench and that really helped us by association. I think by the time we split, it was a number of reasons, but I think we both have done great jobs with our bands.

Not too long ago Relapse moved from Lancaster, PA. To closer to Philadelphia, how come? Just out grew the old location?

Yeah, not only did we out grow that place by about a year or so, but

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sometimes there was a line 4 deep for the bathroom. Besides those, it was really just a suffocating thing. Lancaster was killing us. Not only was it an hour and a half to Philadelphia, and two and a half to NY and no concerts there, no scene, no people just townies. And while the good things were inexpensive living and some quiet living and good restaurants, it wasn't enough. For a company deeply involved in the underground music scene, it was too much for me to drive home from Philadelphia three nights a week during the Summer. And we were there since 1991. Check this out, to put living there in perspective, when we first moved there, I lived in Bill's parents house, in his brothers room. Relapse was in the basement. We weren't walking distance to anything but farm, I had no car and no one I knew except for Bill and I worked 15 hours a day, every day, 7 days a week for a year and a half! I mean there was nothing else to do, work and smoke pot. I mean it was a challenge, all my friends I grew up with, we were all 18-19, they were all in college, partying and getting laid, hanging out and I was sitting in this basement in Pennsylvania.

Sounds a bit grim, but the zero distractions could have been good.

Oh yeah, it forced me to be totally focused on **Relapse**.

How about future wise, I know Relapse.com is a huge thing, where do you plan on going with it all?

Well I like our site a lot. It's been a priority for us to make it look good and be as informative as any site out there. While there's a ton of things in the works, it's hard to say when these new things will surface. But no matter what, we're still going to try and improve it any way we can. I think as far as the internet in general, we're at an exciting time, I mean things are just moving very fast. In the future I think things are just going to be mind blowing, things like being able to access everything ever recorded through a subscription or what you've paid for, digitally broadcast to you wherever you are. Packaging and all that is also going to go through a huge change. I mean look at the kids in this generation, they're brought up with computers in kindergarten and stuff! This generation just has a different outlook an life and I just don't think they're are going to even care about an LP!

I think it'll suck then. I'm a collector, I just don't think I can conform to that way of thinking. Even if I get a CDR of something, it's just not the same, I don't even consider it complete unless I have the real deal.

I agree with that myself, but there's so many people who are like that already and as time goes on, it'll only get worse.

I feel lame even talking about it, but what about Napster?

I think Napster in the short term is good for us. It gets exposure to underground bands. In the long term, it's obvious that sooner or later it'll have to be on a pay basis. I think there's too much money at stake in the entertainment industry to just go free with everything.

Well I'm exhausted. I'm sure I'll think of a few more once we hang up. But in closing congrats on the first 10 years and here's to 10 more.

Tom, thanks man. I'd like to thank you for the years of support as well and thanks to everyone who'll be reading this. Check us out at **www.relapse.com** and we'll see everyone at the fests.

ELECTRIC WIZARD

Un-Lords Of The Dopethrone

What can you say about the mighty Electric Wizard? Simply one of the heaviest Doom Metal bands with amazing albums to boot. Their latest is titled 'Dopethrone' and it's just possibly some of the heaviest and sickest smoke filled Doom to emerge from the U.K. since Black Fucking Sabbath! I spoke to Guitarist/Vocalist/Bongsmoker Jus Osbourn.

Midwest Metal: Now it's been almost or close to four long years since 'Supercoven' was released. I've read the trials and tribulations of trying to get into the studio. So my question would be has 'Dopethrone' been a work in progress or was it completed and just waiting to be recorded?

Jus Osbourn: Yeah, we've been working on it, reworking certain things the whole time, I'd say about the last part was written about six months before we recorded it. We've always had the riffs written, well, maybe 50% of 'em.

With so much down time what was the mood of the band?

Well the mood of the band, even when it's not fucked up is just totally fucked up, ya know? Life totally gets in the way of being in the band, doing gigs and recording and then you've got to do shit to pay the rent. So a lot of the times life's a bit too much, but it's never the band itself.

Going back, what was the first song written for the album?

Uh, the first song written for 'Dopethrone' was the title track itself, and it goes back, like three years ago. The last song for the album was "I, The Witchfinder" which we wrote in the studio. And "Barbarian" was also written in the studio.

How about writing, do you come up with a riff and then bring it in or what?

A lot of riffs usually are written at home, we'll try to spend a lot of time with them trying to find the best notes or whatever. Once they're useable we bring them to rehearsal and everyone usually clicks from there. That's the way it's always been for us, just jam on them, we're comfortable working this way. If the song grooves, it just builds itself.

Are you recording during these jams?

Yeah, all the time. I'll usually take the tape home and go through it. It may take three or four practices until a song is done.

Lyrically, you come up with everything, are you constantly writing?

Uh, yeah, but it's really hard. I usually just sit in my bedroom and smoke about eight bongs (laughs), it kicks ass.

Since I've never interviewed you guys before I'd like to know what you did before jamming in Electric Wizard?

I was in a band called Eternal before we got together. It was pretty much a straight forward Doom band, it was like Trouble man. We had a Christian drummer, it was like White Metal (laughing)! We'd only done a few demo's and then planned on doing a 10" , which we recorded but never released. That was recorded for Rise Above actually, and then we split up.

So that's where Lee comes in?

Yeah, first he was interested in Eternal, then when I went to jam with Mark [Greening-D] and Tim [Bagshaw-B], who were playing in a Sabbath cover band in our town, it was just way fucking better than what I was doing before. Just has much better vibes. I mean the band I was in before, no one was into smoking weed!

I would've fucking quit!

Oh yeah, man. And right when I quit that band I'd copped shitloads, like forty ounces...

Wow (laughing)!!!

(laughing) Yeah man, I got a hold of that stuff and needed someone to jam with. So having that much weed and new people to jam with made my day! So we formed in the six months of jamming four times a week.

How's dealing with Lee as the boss of the label? It's got to be pretty cool, huh?

Totally, I mean as a kid I was totally into Napalm Death and used to hang out with them, go to gigs they did in Birmingham. I was friends with Micky Harris too, so it was really cool, definitely. But working with Lee, I'd say he's our biggest fan, really. And sometimes he's the main reason we're still on the label. We're kind of an awkward band and sometimes the people at the label, you know.

You know something I wanted to tell you was I went to London in December and that's where I picked up 'Dopethrone', because it wasn't available here in America, so I'll always remember buying this album.

Cheers. I had the same thing happen to me when I went to Italy to buy 'Reign In Blood'.

Really?

Yeah, because it was banned here for a year and I had to have it!

Awesome. Now another sort of Cathedral-ism was you guys used the same artist they use for the 'Electric Wizard' debut.

Yeah, we were a pretty young band, not really knowing what the fuck we were doing, I mean all we knew how to do was play. So we took every opportunity that was placed in front of us, so we really never put much thought of what would be best for us, we just said "yeah, yeah, yeah" to everything.

But from that album to the newest, there's some actual progression. The early stuff, even 'Supercoven' has just tons of weird shit going on and 'Dopethrone' is just a culmination, was that the goal?

We just wanted to do something really, really heavy. Not like noisy heavy and I'm not putting down the bands that play that style, I actually like a lot of that stuff, but just something anyone could listen to and enjoy. Like Sabbath did on Black Sabbath, my ex-girlfriend could listen to that! There's really not too many bands that you can please fans and non fans at the same time.

Not to throw you off the subject, but what's your favorite Sabbath album?

'Master Of Reality', great songs, great cover. It changes from time to time, but that's probably my all time fave.

Did you get a chance to see the reunion?

Yeah, I saw 'em at the Ozz Fest in England, it was fucking good. It's something everyone wants to see, that and I missed everyone else. I missed Venom and Celtic Frost, I fucking love Frost, man.

Now the biggest thing for the band is that you're coming to America.

Man, it's a big step for us actually. I mean no other band from our scene in England have made it there, we're the first ones to do it.

Who actually is taking the plunge and making it happen?

Greg from Southern Lord, for about two years he's been telling us that we've got to come to America. And we always told him we would if we knew how, ya know? I think he was always trying to find someone to help us out and in the end he's just gone and done it himself! He was like fuck the agents, they're fucking coming.

Besides getting to play every night, what else are you looking forward to in America?

I don't really know too much else I'm looking to do. I know I'll try and find some good comic shops to try and pick up missing Conan issues. I also think America's has or had some killer Doom Metal bands man, there's Trouble, Pentagram, Iron Man and a big favorite of mine is Dream Death /Penance the whole Maryland and D.C. scene! When I was younger and tape trading, the best shit would come from there. All the people who used to know the guys in Pentagram used to get me their rehearsal tapes.

What do Tim and Mark think about the trip?

Well everyone was not too thrilled at first, really. I mean Tim lost his job knowing he's going to be gone a month and I lost my girl because of it (laughs). That and I don't think we were where should've been at playing wise, but we really started working hard and now we can't wait to come and slay the audiences! We're ready to kill. It'll be expensive, but at least we'll have some merchandise to live off of.

How much planning is going into the set list?

It's going to be pretty varied. We've got four different sets, each one last's an hour. We're doing a little off every album, we're going to be doing "Electric Wizard" off the debut! Loads of stuff off 'Come My Fanatics" and loads off 'Dopethrone'. We're not sure if we're going to get an hour a night, I mean if people think we're gonna play for an hour and a half they'll be dead, then we'd die (laughing)! We're just an assault of fucking feedback, the feedback of death and it doesn't stop. People think we're gonna be mellow or something, ya know chilled out or whatever. But we start and the chaos doesn't stop.

How many times have you heard "stoner rock" in the past few days?

Loads of times have man, I fucking hate that term, I hate that label. I hate when we'll go play a gig man, right? So we go to Holland and they have posters up and it say's Electric Wizard, ya know, stoner rock from wherever! I mean stoner rock means you play like Kyuss or Fu Manchu or something like that. So at our gigs people of all kinds would turn up with their Fu Manchu shirts and shit and they'll usually end up walking out!

Man, nothing worse than a band going to play and maybe, just maybe all four or five guys will smoke a joint before they go on! Fuck that! Smoke until you can't stand and turn it up.

Fuck yeah man, I mean I've smoked with a lot of these so called "stoner" rock bands and they don't even know how to smoke! I've gotten some of them so stoned they can't even play. Friends of mine in Orange Goblin, I've gotten a few of them so high they spewed (laughing), I just called them pussies and laughed! But they're from the city, small town smokers are the hardest.

What about the business of being in a band. What's something that most people don't see?

Ah, the fact that we don't get fucking paid! Fucking everyone else gets paid before you, the cunt at the record shop gets paid before you. The bastard answering the phone at the record label gets paid before you, that sucks. Loads of people, myself included will tell you it's not about the money, but you do this for ten years and if it's not about the money maybe it's time to give up and get a job, you've got to pay the rent!

I think the "it ain't about the money" stuff is true to an extent. You don't want a limo to drive you around, but you need to pay the fucking phone bill!

Exactly! I men if records are in the shops, someone's making money, there's something getting passed around and it's fucking passing me (laughing)! But I think it sucks because that's why so many bands get down, a lot of bands split up over this shit. If it's not the money, it's that you're putting in a lot of hard work and nothing comes of it. Labels take a lot of money man, it's like a sick institution, where do record contracts come from? It's like one was invented early on and now all people do is add more pages, our last one was like one hundred pages!

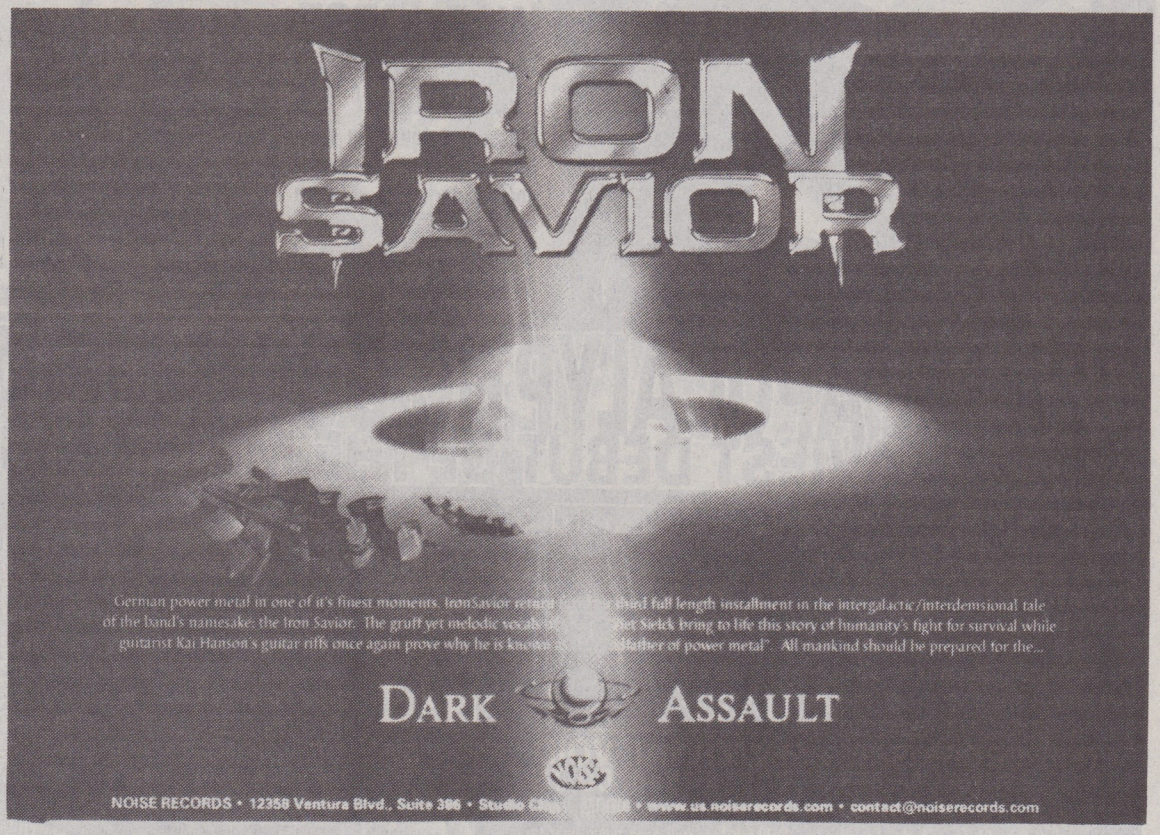
In closing what can we expect?

Ah, like having rats thrown in your face, that's the Wizard live!

The Mystick Krewe Of Clearlight

Sounds of the South by Daniel Hodgson

The steamy bayou of New Orleans has long been a staple of bottom-heavy bluesy rock. From the early days of Crowbar (aka The Slugs-ed.) right up to Down, Louisiana has given the world of Metal some swampy sounds indeed. Whereas most groups from NOLA take the down tuned Melvins-Sabbath hybrid route, **The Mystick Krewe of Clearlight** probably best captures the sounds that first put the area on the musical map many decades ago. With a sound that combines southern rock, Deep Purple-style keyboards and heavy jamming into a nice gumbo brew. **MKOC** are here to just have a good time and jam. Organist Ross Karpalman breathes a sigh of relief now that the CD is in stores, but is he happy with the finished product? "Oh man, absolutely," he beams. "It's cool to hear the songs completely recorded because a lot of these songs are four years old. We've been jamming these songs for a long time so it's good to hear them all done". First time listeners of the band may notice one slight absence, vocals. Instead of having a singer to clutter up the tunes, **MKOC** prefer to let the instruments do the talking. Karpalman explained recording without a vocalist wasn't really a conscious decision, but at the same time, it was. "It was a bit of both," he commented. "We just kind of wound up (being an instrumental band). We tried a bunch of different singers but nothing really worked. "When we started jamming, we weren't very serious, we were just writing music to please ourselves," the hulking organist continued. "And with a singer, they couldn't really keep up. We kinda fill everything up". That's not to say the band, rounded out by Jimmy Bower (G), Joe LaCaze (D), Andy Shepherd (B) and a Paul Webb (G) will never employ a vocalist. Karpleman said for future releases, they may consider using a vocalist, or some guest singers on some of the songs. They recently released a 7" on Man's Ruin with the legendary Scott "Wino" Weinrich on vox. "It was really cool to work with him," Karpleman said. "We used to drive around blasting the Obsessed. It was like working with one of my idols, he's one of the coolest motherfuckers I have ever met. Actually his band, Spirit Caravan, played at my wedding"! **MKOC** have also had COC vocalist Pepper Keenan lend his vocal talents on the bands demo, he sang on their cover of Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Cheatin' Woman". While some members have worked and are members of some extremely heavy bands (Crowbar/EHG/Down), the organist has found the **MKOC** sound is appealing to people who wouldn't have listened to the aforementioned bands on a dare. "It's weird to see some of the older classic rock people at the shows," he continued. "It's common to see a kid with a Mohawk headbanging beside some older guy with a Zeppelin tattoo. It's really cool our sound can spread to such a big gamut of fans, The support from other NOLA bands also helps out," he noted. "In a city like NOLA starting a band is pretty simple, due to the fact that there is a huge brotherhood of musicians. Everyone loves everyone here," he laughed. "I mean Jimmy has played in pretty much every band here...everyone's pretty tight".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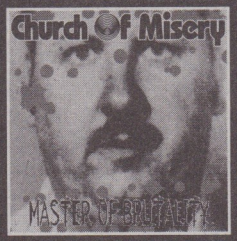

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Record Reviews

(Also included are Demo's, Video's, Magazines and anything else that falls into a review category. All of these are available through mail order, web sites and of course the backbone of the scene, distros)

NAPALM DEATH: *LEADERS NOT FOLLOWERS*-RELAPSE

What's worse? Tribute albums or cover albums? Well depending on who's doing what, I think they both really suck. So **Napalm Death**, kinda quiet since their departure from Earache, have a tie over in the form of a cover album. Not too much of a shock as the Grind Pioneers have always dabbled in side projects, covers and that sort of thing. They pay homage to Pentagram, Death, Repulsion, Raw Power and their trademark cover of Dead Kennedy's "Nazi Punks Fuck Off". **www.relapse.com** =Tom=

YATTERING: *MURDER'S CONCEPT*-SEASON OF MIST/RELAPSE

Following the incredible 'Human's Pain' album, Poland's **Yattering** are about as close to 1992 as you can get without jumping into a time machine. Now I'm not saying that in a bad way, but as extreme as this album is, it lacks the memorable to say the least. Yeah it's fast, furious and contains non stop intensity, but like a 1,000 mph car ride, you'll never get a chance to focus on shit before it's over. Jeff

ROTTING CHRIST: *KHRONOS*-CENTURY MEDIA RECORDS

After a few disappointing releases, Greece's sons of darkness return with a definite nod in the right direction. 'Khronos' still has **Rotting Christ** dabbling in the Goth/Metal realm with it's keyboard and passage tales, but there's an underlying heaviness present that's been missing for a few years. While it's no 'Thy Mighty Contract' it's a decent album that has more good moments than bad. Now if only more bands will continue to see the error of their ways. =Tom=

SHUTDOWN: *FEW AND FAR BETWEEN*-VICTORY RECORDS

If Black Metal should come from Norway, Sweden and the rest of the hot spots, Hardcore should come from New York, Brooklyn more specifically. **Shutdown** have re-kindled a flame in my heart with a killer album in 'Few And Far Between'. Great production as the individual instruments actually come together vs. the usual separation and louder than need be vocals. **www.victoryrecords.com** =Tom=

ORIGIN: *S/T*-RELAPSE RECORDS

I remember getting a demo by **Origin** a few years ago and Jesus Christ have they gotten even more devastating! While it's not really an album of feeling, it's blinding speed and percussive assaults have a "got to hear" quality about 'em. Now boasting the incredible John (ex-Angel Corpse) Longsreth on drums really made me take notice as his work with that band was awe inspiring. So for a grinding Metal fix, look for **Origin** to continue delivering the goods.**www.origin.tsx.org** Jeff

PISSING RAZORS: *FIELDS OF DISBELIEF*-NOISE RECORDS

For a Pantera clone band these guys are doing a good job of keeping up with the Joneses, Anselmo's and Abbott's. True this is their finest sounding record to date, thanks to Pantera man Sterling Winfield, but that shouldn't take away from the Pantera inspired groove **Pissing Razors** lay down. While it's obvious I have no respect for them musically, as anyone can clone a popular band to a T and find a certain amount of success. But I'll give these cowboys from hades some slack for the impressive road work they're known for, because that's just something that cannot be faked or copied. **www.us.noiserecords.com** Tom=

SUPERSHINE: *S/T*-METAL BLADE

Did you ever buy or acquire a disc and ask how and why the fuck did this get signed? Well I do it more times than I like to admit, but this release is something that totally deserves to be heard! Formed by Trouble guitarist Bruce Franklin and King's X man Doug Pinnick, **Supershine** have something totally cool as well as unique happening on their debut album. It rocks, it's melodic, it's hooky it's just solid driving Rock N' Roll that sticks out like a sore thumb in today's climate, but is music to my ears. It's a bit calmer than what you're probably used to hearing, but if you need a change, something more controlled, but not less intense, please do yourself a favor and check this out. **www.metalblade.com** =Tom=

ISIS: *CELESTIAL*-ESCAPE ARTIST RECORDINGS

Boston's **Isis** represents what should be a huge musical movement in the year 2001, but I don't know if the World's ready. Where most bands plod along in their own definition of heavy, **Isis** destroy all barriers of what heavy is and what it should be. Their new album 'Celestial' picks up where their 'Mosquito Control EP left off and it's only gotten more intense. Drum wise, this is a percussion freak's wet dream as this guy just uses so many different, strange patterns while hitting hard as hell the whole time. If you like very aggressive, hard rock with some noise and experimental elements and brutal rhythms, they're just awesome at what they do & how they do it. And icing on the musical cake, astonishing packaging, just so gratifying to a fan to receive something like this, it really is. **www.loudnet.com/escapeartist** =Tom=

CANNIBAL CORPSE: *LIVE CANNIBALISM*-METAL BLADE

Guys. Can't Vincent Locke come up with *anything* better? Man, as if the 'Bloodthirst' artwork wasn't bad enough, this is also ranking high on the shit list. So that aside, I am pretty shocked at how incredible **Cannibal Corpse** comes across on this album. Now I've seen the band, who the fuck hasn't? But I've always seen the band, I never really intensely listened to them live. So I think that's why this record is so impressive from a live standpoint. You get 18 tracks, 9 Barnes era and 9 'Grinder era and by this time George Fisher is as comfortable as he can be doing the classic stuff. So what you get is some great renditions of **Cannibal Corpse** tunes, both old and new, captured live in 2000. The only thing that was and is a major letdown, the packaging is very, very weak and highly disappointing. Give me live album packaging like 'Live After Death' or something. Man, at least be in the fucking ballpark, huh? **www.cannibalcorpse.net** =Tom=

INCESTUOUS: *BRASS KNUCKLE ABORTION*-UNITED GUTTURAL
Holy fucking shit. This is now the ultimate definition of the style "Brutal Death Metal™" This is better than all the stuff Repulse puts out and then some. If you want it sick, it can't get any sicker, faster or any more intense than this. This drummer is in-fucking-credible, I can't even write in full sentences, that's how amazing this album is. Imagine all the bands with Fetus, Corpse, Flesh or Fleshed, all the "tion" bands and all the people that strive to sound like them, well, this is better than them all. **www.unitedguttural.com** or **UGR PO Box 752 Grayslake, IL. 60030** Jeff

VOI VOD: *LIVES*-METAL BLADE
Returning from a very realistic scare involving (B/V) Eric Forrest, the futuristic machine are seemingly putting the pieces back together and I can't wait 'til they do. For now we have a live album from gigs in 1996 and bonus tracks from 1999. The live album is totally enjoyable, and for a band with such a massive catalog of killer material, they do not disappoint. From "Nuclear War" to "Ravenous Medicine" to album opener "Insect" this is exactly what I want in a live album.**www.metalblade.com** Tom

LEGION: *CONQUEROR*-DARK HORIZON RECORDS
I think this is fucking awesome. It reminds me of the early 1990's, totally inspired by Morbid Angel and hints of Deicide and a sound reminiscent of Morrisound all that's needed is a Dan Seagrave cover! But seriously, I really, really like this album. It's not straightforward stuff, there's some good things here and there to keep it interesting the whole album. The drums are really perfect both sound and technique really drive this band and would sorely be missed if not there. **DHR 6435 West Jefferson Blvd. #666 Fort Wayne, IN. 46804** Jeff

SOULLESS: *THE DARKENING OF DAYS*-SELF RELEASED CD 10 TRX
These guys, in one form or another, have been at it a long time. I believe From The Depths was one of their incarnations. Their current style is Black/Death and it's done to perfection, as is the drumming and the riffs. **Soulless** should be able to do something behind this release because it's as solid as it gets. **c/o Chris Dora 6110 Bradley Ave Parma, OH. 44129 chrisdora@webtv.net** Jeff

NILE: *BLACK SEEDS OF VENGEANCE*-RELAPSE RECORDS
There's almost a feeling, among Metal people, that **Nile** can do no wrong. I mean you never hear a bad word about the band as each album, show, tour is praised to no end. Well I was ready to do my part and rip them apart, if need be. I really was. So I popped in 'Black Seeds Of Vengeance' with an attitude and wanted to dislike it. Well I was blown the fuck away. Like no other record this year, 'BSOV' smoked by bullshit attitude and I sat there, listened and when the album finished, I manually shut my big mouth and put pen to paper and this is what I came up with. **Nile** build on the foundation of Death Metal and do to it what no one else can. They take the elements of guitar, voice, drums and bass and they do everything in their will to perfect it, and then the work starts. The music on 'BSOV' isn't walking on water, it's just beyond what everyone else is doing. Lyrically, the same accolades, as they're interesting without being overbearing. Who knows what the future holds for **Nile**, but for now they have an album more enjoyable and more innovative than even the new Morbid Angel. **www.nile-catacombs.com** Jeff

TREPHINATION: *WITH WAR COMES ATROCITIES*-SRCD3 TRX
There's only three songs, but very intense and enough lyrics for a double album. While I'm not sure if I want to read a book's worth of lyrics on any album, but at least they're pissed and warlike. For an intensity factor this disc is a ten. For originality and the rest, it's a six. Still, I'd be interested in hearing more from these guys in the future. **PO Box 5013**

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EYEHATEGOD: *CONFEDERACY OF RUINED LIVES*-CENTURY MEDIA
After last issue's joyous celebration that they are, in fact, still alive and kicking, what more can be said? Well this is some of the strongest **EYEHATEGOD** material to date and 'Confederacy Of Ruined Lives' is the album they had to make. It's pure **EHG** so no major surprises there, but it's got some feeling that was lacking on 1996's 'Dopesick' and of course the 'Southern Discomfort' release was about as cold as can be. So knowing that, just pick this up, quit listening to half ass sissy rock labeled as "stoner" shit. **EHG**, addiction, pain and misery have never sounded so good.**eyehategod@excite.com**Tom

SIX FEET UNDER: *GRAVEYARD CLASSICS*-METAL BLADE
You'll never find a band more criticized than **Six Feet Under**. From their music, their look, their choices, their cover songs on and on and on it never seems to stop. Well to add about a gallon of fuel to the fire, here comes 'Graveyard Classics'. Well depending on the song, it can either be decent or a fucking train wreck. The classic songs, "Smoke On The Water, TNT, Blackout, Purple Haze" etc. are pretty bad. "Sweet Leaf, Piranha, In League With Satan" sounded cool. Typical **SFU**, a mixed bag to say the least. **www.sfu420.com** =Tom=

SIXTY WATT SHAMANS: *SEED OF DECADES*-SPITFIRE RECORDS
I've come to really like this album, it's heavy where it needs to be, but the thing is, the band have a lot more going than just being one dimensional 'heavy". So in closing, if you like the heavy shit, and I'm not talking about Death Metal, just regular heavy shit, smoking music if you will, but this is a fucking cool album for the collection. **Sixty Watt Shaman**, remember the name because they're on to something, something really killer. **www.sixtywattshaman.com** Tom

HALFORD: *RESURRECTION*-METAL-IS
Let's get the facts down first. **Rob Halford** was/is, will always be one of the, if not the, finest Heavy Metal voices we'll ever come to know. That's the fact and no one will ever be able to it that away from him. Another thing not under consideration is that the man has made a mountain of mistakes which, in turn, resulted in his banishment from Heavy Metal. So knowing this full and well, Rob has pulled a Bruce Dickinson and created a monumental solo release that pales his past solo (Fight included) work like no other. But is it a little too late? I guess not, but I for one, am not so forgiving. Yes, the new music is great. His voice is fucking killer. But anyone who say's "Heavy Metal is dead" can kiss my ass. I like this album, it's a great comeback, but just a little too calculated for comfort. **www.robhalford.com** =Tom=

THE HAUNTED: *THE HAUNTED MADE ME DO IT*-EARACHE RECS
Overall, a much more mid paced, less balls out album than their debut. Sure there's still a few burners, "Victim Iced", my favorite track just smokes. But I really don't have too much to say about this, the musicianship is still there, but for some reason the songs don't do much for me. Why? Not really sure, maybe it's the new Vocalist? Nah, the change wasn't too drastic, though I do prefer Dolving's rantings to this guy, and there's nothing as cool as "Forensick" either. **www.earache.com** =Tom=

LIZZY BORDEN: *DEAL WITH THE DEVIL*-METAL BLADE RECORDS
Man, fuck **Lizzy Borden**! Does the world really need to hear from this guy again? The master chameleon has returned and I have a feeling he won't be back for long because this album really sucks. This isn't 1987 anymore, no one will be into his big "comeback". And if you are, good for you. I don't want to hear about it. **www.metalblade.com** Jeff

SOULFLY: *PRIMITIVE*-ROADRUNNER RECORDS
Well, remember a few reviews ago I said how people really loved to hate Six Feet Under. Well, of course, there's many people who feel the same way about Max Cavalera. Regardless, 'Primitive' picks up where the 1998 self titled album left off, tribal, eclectic, heavy, spiritual and experimental and just some of the ways to describe the latest album of Max and Co. The album is a testimony to someone who obviously does what he feels and feels what he does, so I can't just sit back and knock it. Sure there's some stuff I don't understand, but it's not my album now is it? So all I can honestly say is this: 1) the kids will love it as it's directed towards them and 2) if you liked the first album, you'll love this as well. **www.soulflytribe.com** =Tom=

OVERKILL: *BLOODLETTING*-METAL-IS/SANCTUARY
So begins yet another chapter in **Overkill**. Can you believe they're still going and going strong? Well the original Wrecking Crew are back with their, I think, 14th album and shit, I guess you've just got to respect 'em. And it's more than the fact that they've never compromised, it's also that they've never folded under pressure to change or alter. Their latest creation, 'Bloodletting', is about as pure as you can get. It's Thrash, it's got it's good and has it's not so good but most importantly for the freaks who love the band, they're back and that outweighs everything. **www.wreckingcrew.com** =Tom=

HAMMERFALL: *RENEGADE*-NUCLEAR BLAST
The biggest Power Metal band in the land return with another album that doesn't seem to far removed from their last. Now call me hopeful, but I hope this is an indication that the PM trend is on it's way out, it just has to be. **HammerFall** still proudly wear their allegiance to Helloween and all the sub bands that followed, and to these ears, it's just growing very old. That's a personal comment, I just don't care for this music. I don't care for the endless amounts of praise, I don't care for the rehash sounds of a band who peaked in 1987. Jeff

THE MYSTICK KREWE OF CLEARLIGHT: *S/T*-TEE PEE RECS
Well this is a cool surprise. **T.M.K.O.C.**, formed in 1996, features Eyehategod members Jimmy Bower and Joe LaCaze and their right hand man Ross Karpleman and what can I say? This is just fucking awesome. Those expecting the brash sound of EHG will surely be upset, but for those who follow the NOLA sound can slip right in. I suppose the first thing you'll notice is there's no vocalist. Yeah, the whole disc has nothing as far as vocals are concerned. But for some reason it's not as strange as it may seem. The band is driven by Karpleman's Allman Bros. meets Deep Purple sound with a great foundation of

Rock and straight up Southern style which is really intense. **www.teepeerecords.com** =Tom=

EZURATE: *S/T*-CD DEMO
When it's this bad, they call it "Black Metal". That's what this demo should've been called. I couldn't tell one song from another as it was all pieced together with the ever annoying Black Metal production. But as far as the look goes, the band, or should I say band member, has the look down pat. All he needs is some music to go along with that paint. **Ezurate PO Box 772 Lemont, IL. 60439 Ctnokkuron@aol.com** Tom

LAMB OF GOD: *NEW AMERICAN GOSPEL*-PROSTHETIC/M BLADE
Lamb Of God are incredible at what they do. Very kick ass, intense and aggressive Metal. No, not an Iron Maiden kind of Metal, but then again not a cheese Death Metal either. This is just some catchy and brutal straight Metal that combines a few styles, yet comes out natural and to the point. Great drumming and drum sound, Vocals are a notch above standard, clear and kinda shouted, but not at all like a bad Hardcore band wanting to be Metal.
www.Lamb-Of-God.com =Tom=

NEUROSIS: *SOVEREIGN*-NEUROT RECORDINGS
Neurosis are a severely interesting band. They really don't belong to any one genre, yet they can easily go from scene to scene and make it their own. So they've obviously gained a bigger exposure since signing to Relapse back in 1995/6 and have done some really major tours, but somehow I don't think they really care. Throughout their 15 + year career **Neurosis** have always done things differently, they've done it their way. So it's no surprise they've started their own label to not only release new music by artists they feel strongly about, but also their back catalog has a new home. So 'Sovereign' is the first **Neurosis** release on the label and it's an amazing piece of work. All the elements of **Neurosis** are present, yet there's an undertone of serenity to some of the tracks. Essential is not a word I use very often, this however is as close as it can possibly get. **Neurot Recordings PO Box 410209 San Francisco, CA. 94141 www.neurosis.com** Tom

CRYPTOPSY: *AND THEN YOU'LL BEG*-CENTURY MEDIA RECORDS
This is a record I've been looking forward to hearing. 'Whisper Supremacy' was an intense listen from start to finish and I just knew Canada's finest would not let me down, would they?. Well, no they haven't. 'And Then You'll Beg' is pretty much more of the same, but with an improved, in parts, sound. The sound overall is very high end which helps with the attack of the band. Some people don't care for this sound, but for **Cryptopsy** it works. Vocalist Mike DiSalvo is now totally in control and the songs show it. "We Bleed" and "Voice Of Unreason" are two of my favorite tracks and things can only go up from here. **www.cryptopsy.net** Jeff

SUPLECS: *WRESTLIN' WITH MY LADY FRIEND*-MAN'S RUIN RECS
Introduction was seeing these guys open for Eyehategod and they blew me away. **Suplecs** are a three piece from NOLA who may have similar foundations to that scene's notables, but trust me when I say they stand out pretty fine by themselves. Album opener "Stalker" sets the pace for a sludgy, yet melodic bash fest. If you like heavy, bruising shit, **Suplecs** is something you need. Imagine a dirtier, rawer Fu Manchu and you'll have **Suplecs**. **PO Box 850185 New Orleans, LA. 70185** =Tom=

MORBID ANGEL: *GATEWAYS TO ANNIHILATION*-EARACHE
What's the world coming to when **Morbid Angel** pull a 'South Of Heaven'? Well I suppose the best thing to do, if you're a fan, is to ignore it and keep listening. That's what I did and this grew on me. Imagine a deeper, more textured affair than 'Formulas...', then imagine the vibe of say "Where The Slime Live" multiply that by some lava or whatever the hell Trey's trip is, and you have 'Gateways To Annihilation'. **www.morbidangel.com** Jeff

DYING FETUS: *DESTROY THE OPPOSITION*-RELAPSE RECS
I haven't heard any **Dying Fetus** material since they signed with Pulverizer way back when. So saying I haven't kept up with them is an understatement. Well I can say this for sure, this is when the word brutal comes into use. **Dying Fetus** are just non-stop brutality. Sure you can't dig the feel, you can't remember any of it after it's done, you surely can't headbang to it, I suppose all you can do is listen to it and enjoy it. But the good thing is the recording is phenomenal, to blend all this insane shit and make it sound this clear, well it's almost worth the price of admission. **www.relapse.com** Jeff

IMMOLATION: *CLOSE TO A WORLD BELOW*-METAL BLADE
A new album in record time! So has anything changed in the **Immolation** camp? Well, not really. They're still Death Metal purists, they still denounce Christianity, they still have some killer artwork and the rest falls into place as well. Musically there's some strong Black Metal undertones too more than a few songs. I suppose it's only natural, but I think it's the subtleness of these undertones that keep it 100% **Immolation**. I wouldn't say this is my favorite album by the band, but considering I didn't have to wait three or four years makes it even better. **www.ImmolationDirect.com** Jeff

NEVERMORE: *DEAD HEART IN A DEAD WORLD*-CENTURY MEDIA
In 1999 with the release of 'Dreaming Neon Black' and the non stop touring in support of one of the greatest Metal albums, ever, **Nevermore** finally "arrived" in the US. So the follow up to that album was something I had my doubts about. Well all doubts were crushed as soon as opener "Narcosynthesis" kicked in. Awesome. I was a little leery of the band not using Producer Neil Kernon, after all I'm a "if it's not broke, why fix it" person, but Andy Sneap has brought out a different attack that was not present before. This album succeeds because not only is it what the fans expect from **Nevermore**, but, more importantly, it's what they want. Heavy, technical (without being overbearing), driving and superbly crafted American Heavy Metal in the year 2000. What more do you want? **www.the.nl/nevermore/** =Tom=

VA: *TALES FROM THE CRYPT/ MONSTERS OF METAL*-THE RIGHT STUFF/CAPITOL RCS
"Heaven And Hell"-**Black Sabbath**
"Creepy Feelings"-**Armored Saint**
"Five Magics" –**Megadeth**
"The Bell Witch"- **Mercyful Fate**
"Hollow Ground"- **The Haunted**
"Beyond The Black"- **Metal Church**
Plus tracks by **Pantera**, **Entombed**, **Judas Priest** etc. =Tom=

BURN IT DOWN: *LET THE DEAD BURY THE DEAD*-ESCAPE ARTIST

The only way to really digest this album is 100% Find it, buy it, listen to it and most importantly, read it. Great lyrics, powerful and direct music falling somewhere between Neurosis and Sick Of It All (the Metal years) and you have a slight knowledge of 'Let The Dead Bury The Dead'. The reason I mention the lyrics is because I tried to just listen and really didn't get it, but having something to put A & B together was cool. Overall, highly recommended. **www.burnitdown.com** or **www.loudnet.com/escapeartist**

CARNAL FORGE: *FIREDEMON*-CENTURY MEDIA RECORDS

Blending a killer combination of classic 1992-3, Death Metal with modern sounds isn't the most original idea around, but if it works, man, does it work. Well **Carnal Forge** work it pretty well. If you've been following the band, they got off to a good start a few years back on Sweden's Wrong Again Music and some things never change. They continue their mean streak with 'Firedemon', 12 songs, all fast as hell with enough power to satisfy anyone. **www.carnalforge.com** =Tom=

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FLESHGRIND: *THE SEEDS OF ABYSMAL TORMENT*-OLYMPIC

Hate to start this review out on a sour note, but abysmal is right. The recording of this album is really, really bad. For a band as low and fucking fast as **Fleshgrind**, the recording just sounds sluggish. Song wise it's their strongest material to date, very pummeling and direct and at times memorable. But it'll go down as a bit of a disappointment because of the production. With all the hard work and dedication they deserve to have their sound captured. **www.fleshgrind.com** Tom

BURIAL: *ENLIGHTENED WITH PAIN*-LOST DISCIPLE RECORDS

I thought the music on this album was very enjoyable. Very brutal, great leads and the drumming was very responsible for the repeated spins. However, the vocals on the disc are just way too crappy. Now, I too enjoyed Suffocation, loved 'em. But the vocal performance here brings this record down, this guy makes gargling with glass sound audible. **www.lostdisciple.com** Jeff

CIANIDE: *DIVIDE AND CONQUER*-MERCILESS RECORDS

Somewhat quiet since the release of their 1997 LP 'Death, Doom and Destruction', the Chicago Death Metal institution known as **Cianide** are back. Pummeling down on the senses is their latest, 'Divide And Conquer' and if you're familiar with **Cianide**, thankfully, not much has changed. They're still heavy as hell but the new album shows more than it's fair share of fast material. "Armed To The Teeth" is a good example, faster and blast beat driven. But fans of the traditional **Cianide** style material will have their hands full as well, as there's some very catchy, memorable and killer songs. "One-Thousand Ways To Die" is just a fucking monster from start to finish, same with "Remain In Hell", the later being one of the most unique songs the band has done to date. While I would've liked a bit more separation in the recording, it fits the assault nicely. **Merciless PO Box 72; 97448 Arnstein, Germany** or **info@merciless-records.de** Tom

AVERNUS: *WHERE THE SLEEPING SHADOWS LIE*-CURSED PRODUCTIONS

The rise and fall and current uphill battle of **Avernus** has been something of interest for me for quite some time. I suppose the easiest thing to begin with is the era this disc begins with, the 'Sadness' demo of 1994. That demo was and still is one the finest pieces of independent music I'd ever heard. But through time the band changed, musically and personally. Going by the liner notes present on this collection they [the reasons] seem 100% true, the changes were natural and simply an evolution of a group of people. But once the Death/Doom style was removed from their sound people [fans] seemed to vanish. I was one of them. I thought some of it was still real good, but it seemed too much of a change. But only time will tell which direction the band takes in 2000/01. **PO Box 302 Elkhart, In. 46515 www.cursedproduction.com** Tom

ELEGY: *FORBIDDEN FRUIT*-NOISE RECORDS

There's something rather easy listening about 'Forbidden Fruit' by **Elegy**. No, it's not soft rock, but most PM bands are a total chore to listen to and then have to review. This album flows nicely and the singer, at times, reminds me heavily of Dio, which is cool in my book. Like I said the album has a flow to it which is very important with a style like Power Metal. **www.ianparry.com** =Tom=

ABOMINANT: *UNGODLY*-DEATHGASM RECORDS

Well I've missed an album in the **Abominant** catalog, so I've got to go back to the 'Embrace...' album. But once again things sound incredible. I remember the last album I'd heard from them was leaning towards a Black Metal thing, it was darker and just more disturbing. This album seems like a combination of Black/Death and the sound Kills **PO Box 681415 Marietta, GA. 30068 deathgasm@hotmail.com** Jeff

NOVEMBERS DOOM: *THE KNOWING*-DARK SYMPHONIES

Seeing that this album has been in the making for a very long time, I was ultimately pleased at what I hear. **Novembers Doom**, the US ambassadors of all that is dark and depressing have finally returned. With a new deal and the, seemingly, mandatory member changes, the band have found what seems to be their formula for progress. The new music is not that far removed from the early material, but it's the vibe

and feel that speaks almost louder than the music itself. The usual Death Doom ingredients are here, but it's the oddities and there are many, that make this such an intense listen. If you're a fan of the classic Death/Doom pioneers you'll have no problem diving right into this. Dave **www.novembersdoom.com**

COLD AS LIFE: *DECLINATION OF INDEPENDENCE*-CTYC PROD

Detroit's veterans of all that is, well let's just say heavy, are finally back. A few years older and wiser and with massive improvements to their overall sound sees what I feel is a whole new band. 'Declination Of Independence' is to Metal Core what 'Seven Churches' was to Death/Thrash, a statement! **Cold As Life** have gotten heavier, faster, harsher and more aggressive in every way imaginable. If you like raw, aggressive, pissed, deep, driving and intense music which draws on influences from GBH to Slayer and everything in between, 'DOI' fucking delivers. **Cold As Life PO Box 441905 Detroit, MI. 48244 www.coldaslife.com** =Tom=

ANNIHILATOR: *CARNIVAL DIABLOS*-METAL-IS RECORDS

I think this album will come as a surprise to many a metal head. **Annihilator** have been yesterday's news since the release of 'Never Neverland' in 1990. And until a year or so ago were still found in the where are they now section, only to return. Now I've got to admit being a bit hesitant when hearing Joe Comeau was leaving the 'Kill for the Canucks, but after a few listens, the man just rules. I'd have to say he makes this album much more pleasurable and his vocal contributions are great. "Battered" the instrumental "Liquid Oval" and Comeau's dead on Halford voice on "Time Bomb" are instant cuts of pure **Annihilator** updated Thrash, no beats, or samples just plain Metal! **www.annihilatormetal.com** Tom

VA: *CONTAMINATED 3.0*-RELAPSE RECORDS

What can you say about **Relapse Records**? I mean they are THE extreme label. Their advertising and marketing are legendary, their bands are either the greatest thing since sliced bread or the worst thing since Vanilla Ice. So this comp is just the be all end all for the label and what they've done in 10 years of hard work. You've got the foundations of the company, the current crop and the ones that are long gone. Some of these are **Deceased, Incantation, Mortician Nile, Soilent Green, Orgin, Cephalic Carnage, Brutal Truth, Neurosis, Unsane** etc. **www.relapse.com** =Tom=

ELECTRIC WIZARD: *DOPETHRONE*-RISE ABOVE

One of the heaviest albums I've heard in a very long time. **Electric Wizard** have created a monumental heavy album that is at times beyond description. A song like "Funeralopolis" just sums up the whole vibe of the album, not only is it heavy as hell, but the ending "chant" of "Nuclear warheads ready to strike, this World is so fucked, let's end it tonight" is just insane. It's been a long wait for this album and I for one was not disappointed at all. Don't dumb this down by calling "stoner rock" either, as this is pure smoke filled Doom at it's fucking finest. This is an album that doesn't come along every few months, this is THE Doom album of the year! =Tom=

WARHORSE: *AS HEAVEN TURNS TO ASH*-SOUTHERNLORD RECS

Pure devastation! According to their info sheet, **WarHorse** have other releases, but want to concentrate on this one as their first. While I can't comment on the previous, I too would focus on the present. 'As Heaven Turns To Ash', their Southern Lord debut, is an instant Doom classic. From the obliterating "Doom's Bride" to the 10 + minute mind bending "Lysergic Communion" to a hauntingly serene "Amber Vial" **WarHorse** are fucking Doom legends in waiting. I can't recommend this as purely being essential, it's much more than that. **http://come.to/warhorse** or **godvomit1@aol.com** =Tom=

THE FORSAKEN: *MANIFEST OF HATE*-CENTURY MEDIA

I'm having a hard time getting into all these Swedish bands. Now I didn't have the same problem back in the early 90's, but for some reasons I can't tell a lot of today's bands apart. The all sound like at The Gates mixed with The Haunted mixed with Entombed. This doesn't make **The Forsaken** bad, it just makes them hard to pick out in the crowded scene. So if you long for the Sunlight sound, this is another one to add to the list. **www.centurymedia.com** =Tom=

EARTH CRISIS: *LAST OF THE SANE*-VICTORY RECORDS

An album of covers and a few hard to find cuts from Victory and Vegan hero's **Earth Crisis**. While I've never been a huge admirer of the band, no one can deny their importance to current day Hardcore and also it's many movements. Opening the disc with the ever popular "Hell Awaits" intro things get off to a nice start. You also get Zep ("Wanton Song"), "Paint It Black" by The Stones, "Children Of The Grave", "Earth A.D." and some original stuff. Nice deal, watch for a video/DVD out soon. **www.earthcrisis.cc** Jeff

VA: *POLISH ASSAULT*-RELAPSE

Kicking things off are **Decapitated** who I believe are all like 17 and 18. They're kick ass though. Fast and Technical, as are all the bands here. But represented are 5 tracks from their 1998 'The Eyes Of Horus' demo. Next is **Yattering** who have their 'Murder's Concept' album licensed by Relapse. They're one of the fucking fastest bands currently out there doing the Death/Grind thing. Yat have 3 tracks. **Lost Soul** also have the licensing thing with Relapse. Super heavy, fast and precise. Their contribution is 4 tracks. **Damnable** have a much lower sound. Both musically and vocally, this shit's like a faster Fleshgrind/Mortician type. Tom

VA: *NY TAKEOVER VOL.1*-VICTORY RECORDS

All Out War, Grey Area, Reach The Sky, all recorded live during a Victory Showcase. Things get going with NY's **All Out War**. Fucking great band. You get three songs from their 'For Those Who Were Crucified' LP and an unreleased song as well. What? No 'Destined To Burn'? Just kidding! Brutal set. Also included 4 ea. From Grey Area and Reach the Sky.**www.victoryrecords.com** Tom

CRADLE OF FILTH: *MIDIAN*-KOCH/MUSIC FOR NATIONS

No matter what label they get tagged with, **Cradle Of Filth** excel at each of them.. If you start with the Goth label, there may be darker bands, but none as musically extreme. If you tag them with Black, well that's fine, but can they back it up and play it live? I can assure you they can, and do. If

you label them, they take that label and make you re-think it, that's the sign of a band that will last for a long time. 'Midian' for whatever reason is the right album at the right time. I'd say it's a bit more accessible as far as extremities go, but that's a point to be argued elsewhere. The playing here is top notch, new addition and ex-ATG/Haunted Drummer Adrian Erandlson is just amazing in precision and delivery. Vocal wise, Dani has cut back on the paint peeling screeching and uses it as an accent versus entire song. No matter what, this is a strong record and witnessing them live has made a believer out of me. **www.theorderofthedragon.com** =Tom=

CATASTROPHIC: *THE CLEANSING*-METAL BLADE

Formed by Trevor Peres, members of NY's Pyrexia and ex-Internal Bleeding bassist Brian Hobbie, **Catastrophic** has the experience, but are they any good? I think so. Start with the unmistakable tone of Peres and build from there. I think the key to this bands success or failure will be Vocalist Keith DeVito. The guy has a cool range where he can growl like Tardy or pummel like an early Cavalera. Musically, it's all heavy, some fast, most are just kick ass Death Metal tunes. **www.catastrophic.org** =Tom=

DESTINY'S END: *TRANSITION*-METAL BLADE RECORDS

I loved the first **Destiny's End** album 'Breathe Deep The Dark'. 'Transition' is a far more mature release, really building on what they started with the debut, but without rehashing. James Rivera has never sounded better and some of these songs would be less than stellar with another vocalist. However, all the credit has to go to the core members (DeLucie/Andi/Craig and the departed Perry Grayson) who really continue to create classic Metal in a modern way. **www.destinysend.com** =Tom=

CORPSEVOMIT: *RAPING THE EARS OF THOSE ABOVE*-BLACKENED MOON PROD.

After what seems an eternity, their debut full length is finally here and it's been worth the wait. 'Raping The Ears Of Those Above' is similar to most first albums, it's material that has been a big part of the band's existence, re-recorded and it's cool to follow the progression of the band. Die hard fans will get **CV** stalwarts like "Maggot Lamb" and "Gathering Chemical Children" while new tracks like "Waste" and "Death Meddle" show some expansion in their sound. **www.corpsevomit.com** Tom

SOILWORK: *A PREDATOR'S PORTRAIT*-NUCLEAR BLAST

Lots of hype surrounding this release and I'm not really sure why. I've liked some of their work in the past, they're good songwriters and excellent musicians, 'Steelbath Suicide' was an awesome disc. However in light of the overload of Swedish stuff in the past few years some good, most horseshit, it's getting harder and harder to get fully into albums like this. On this in particular there seems to be an injection of more melodic tones and structures, that's fine, because of the quality of musicians, it will work. However, as close minded as I am I prefer my Swedish stuff to echo Dismember, classic Entombed. =Tom

CATHEDRAL: *ENDTYME*-EARACHE RECORDS

First off, if you're a big fan of the overly groovy/disco style **Cathedral** made famous, you'll probably be a bit bummed. On the other hand I couldn't be more excited. While not an exact return to the "forest", 'Endtyme' is some of the heaviest **Cathedral** in years. **Cathedral** are Doom, this album is kick ass and Lee Dorrian is still haunted by robots. **www.earache.com** =Tom=

KING DIAMOND AND BLACK ROSE-*20 YEARS AGO A NIGHT OF REHEARSAL*-METAL BLADE

People have been hounding King Diamond about pre-Mercyful Fate stuff since the release of the classic 'Melissa' back in 1983. **Black Rose** were deeply rooted in their influences [Deep Purple] and it shows. I can't say I'd listen to this if I didn't know it was the King. However, it's still such a historic piece of Hard Rock, early Heavy Metal you can't go wrong. **www.metalblade.com** =Tom=

KREATOR: *1985-1992 PAST LIFE TRAUMA*-NOISE RECORDS

I don't care if you're a diehard **Kreator** fan or someone who's never heard of them before in your life, this collection is killer! From rare tracks to classics this comp has it all. Also included, lyrics to every song, rare pics and extensive notes from Mille. **www.noiserecords.com** =Tom=

CHURCH OF MISERY: *MASTER OF BRUTALITY*-SOUTHERN LORD

This is a six track disc displaying C.O.M.'s Sabbath, Sleep, Vitus, EHG etc. roots and it fucking rocks! Also included is a Blue Oyster Cult ("Cities On Flame") cover and some killer John Wayne Gacy artwork. The more I listen to this, the more I fucking dig it. =Tom=

FAILED HUMANITY: *THE SOUND OF RAZORS THROUGH FLESH*-CANDLELIGHT RECORDS

Failed Humanity, from the first track lay to waste the notion that straight and brutal Death Metal will ever disappear. While nothing groundbreaking, 'The Sound Of Razors Through Flesh' is a solid album throughout. While their influences are loud and proud it's nowhere near as typical as your traditional Cannibal Corpse clone band. Each song seems to have this breakdown part, which really shows off the guitarist's ability to riff like motherfuckers! =Tom=

IRON SAVIOR: *DARK ASSAULT*-NOISE RECORDS

Power Metal from, where else, Germany! So this is my absolute worse style of Metal to listen to, read about or give a flying fuck about. I couldn't tell you if Iron Savior were the ultimate or shit. But one thing is for sure, they've got label support and a great sounding album and it's packaging is everything a fan of theirs can hope for. So take that info and do what ever you want with it. **www.iron-savior.com** =Tom=

OPETH: *BLACKWATER PARK*-KOCH/MUSIC FOR NATIONS

'Blackwater Park' is pretty goddamn amazing. I really wasn't expecting to be overwhelmed, but that's what happened. The sound is full and clear yet retains a heaviness that is total class. From the clean vocals to the Death Metal growls, every word carries with power, same with all the instruments, just a great production. If I had my way, I'd have them ease up on all the clean stuff as at some points it's a long time until things get moving. But that's me and I wouldn't consider myself a full blown fan. **www.opeth.com** =Tom=

MINDSCAR: *MERLIN THE ENCHANTER*-DEMO CD 7 TRACKS

I didn't review the **Mindscar** demo in the last issue, but I heard it. It was , like any band's first offering, pretty crude to say the least. They've returned and again, like any young band, have changed their direction a bit. And if you ask me, they will eventually change ten more times before they get it perfect. Their current demo shows a darker, more intense, brand of Death Metal with hints of Progressive (ala Death) thrown in. I think it's not bad considering their ages and experience, but it's got to be a bit tighter than this recording shows. Again, I think this was said in the last issue, in a few years these guys will own the underground, and I still believe it. But for now are just trying to prefect their vision and it's well on it's way. **Mindscar 600 Northern Way #702 Winter Springs, FL. 32708** www.mindscar.net Jeff

VIRGIN STEEL: *THE HOUSE OF ATREUS ACT II* -NOISE RECS

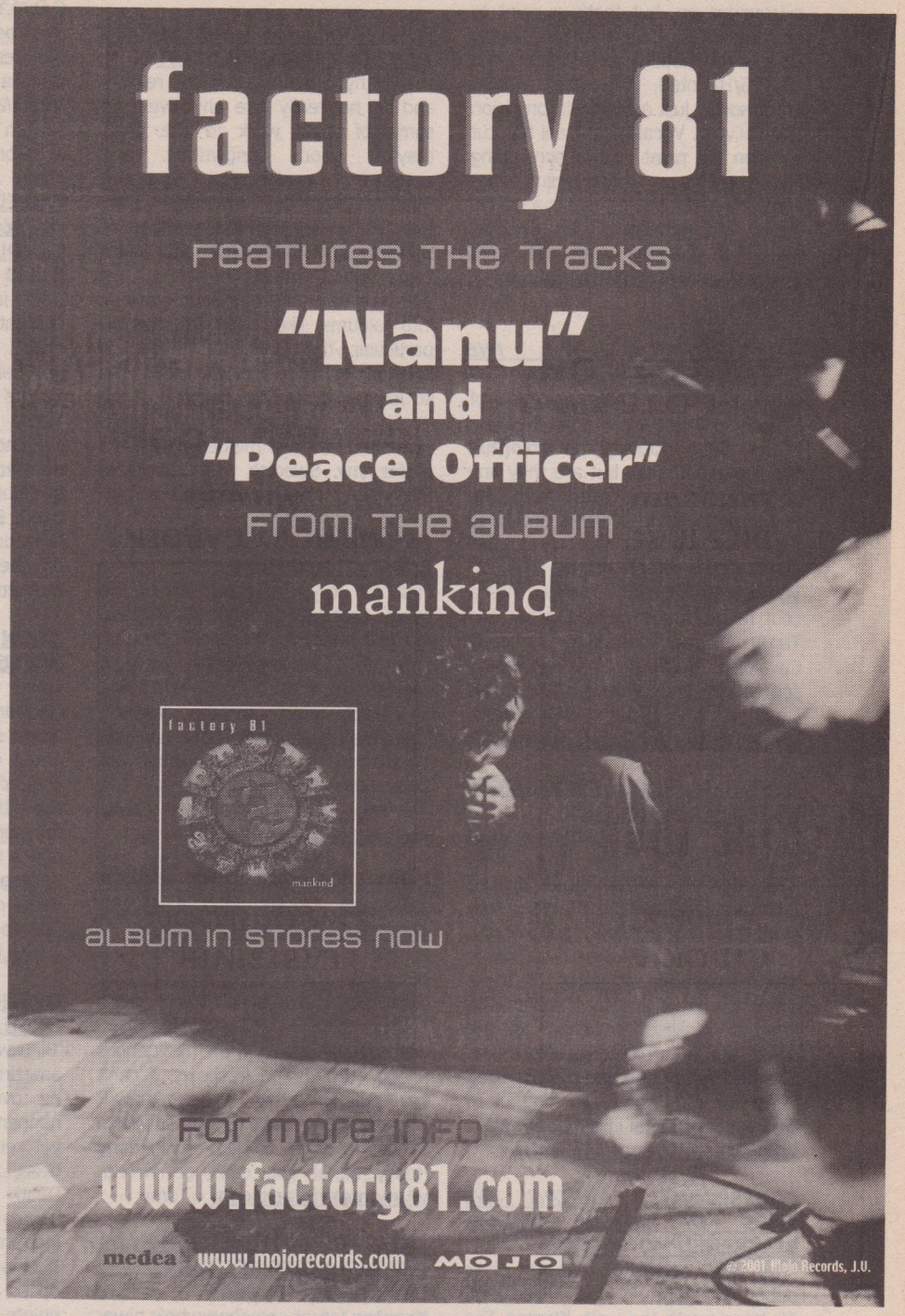
Being a reviewer in such a historic and prolific Metal Magazine has it's up's and downs. One good usually comes with four or five bad's and that's the way it's been forever. I was given the new **Virgin Steel** album to review. I don't really care for Power Metal, never have and I can't imagine a day where I'll crave this style. Well I wish I was so into PM that the arrival of this album gave me a stroke. If you're a **VS** fan, then you're year is off to a good start. **www.home-of-virginsteel.com** JS

ZYKLON: *WORLD OV WORMS*-CANDLELIGHT RECORDS

Fronted by members of Emperor, **Zyklon** were huge the second the engineer pressed the record button in the studio. I think their cold and mechanical take on Black Metal will ultimately please the masses, but with side projects I usually hope for something more. While the bases are covered in Black Metal meets Death Metal game, it would've been cool to hear a looser, more riff orientated album from Samoth. This is not to say this sucks, it's just an extreme release with great name association. **www.zyklontribe.com** Jeff

EXCEL: *SPLIT IMAGE*-ROTTEN RECORDS

This disc contains the 1985 'Split Image' LP, 8 demo tracks from 85/86



and their contribution to the 'Welcome To Venice' comp. I forgot how killer **Excel** really were, it's crossover music the way it once was and the way it should've remained. From the liner notes, which I may add are super complete, it seems the band are still around or planning to return. But the music's held up nicely after all this time.**www.excel-losangeles.com** Jeff

DIMMU BORGIR: *PURITANICAL EUPHORIC MISANTHROPIA*-NUCLEAR BLAST

I listened to a whole **Dimmu Borgir** album! I'm quite amazed as well, I've always made it through four, maybe five complete songs before turning it off in disgust. This is the band everyone brags about? This is the future of "Black" Metal? They pretty much fucking suck! Their ace in the hole is without a doubt Nick Barker, shame they play over his drumming though. Even the addition of Old Man's Child Galder couldn't save this Cradle robbing ship! **www.dimmu-borgir.com** Jeff

DARKANE: *INSANITY*-CENTURY MEDIA/W.A.R. MUSIC

Why buy this album? Well with the many Swedish Death hopefuls out there, and there are many, it can be tough to find a band that seems to stray away from the typical. I think I have a pick for you. **Darkane** deliver the sound you know all too well, but they do it with enough original flair and that makes it different enough to actually deserve repeated spins. Opening with a classical piece, the musical aspect of **Darkane** shouldn't go unnoticed and track by track they seem to slam the point home. Tom=

WASP: *UNHOLY TERROR*-METAL IS RECORDS

Another **WASP** album, another claim to be like a past album. This one claims to be like 'Headless Children' and Blackie doesn't even allow the listener to make the assumption, he'd rather tell you this in the liner notes. Whatever. All I know is this, since the late 80's **WASP** has only really shined on one release and that was 'The Crimson Idol'. That was their finest and all the reunion bullshit with Chris Holmes and the "outrageous" stage fodder will never even come close to their debut or the "idol". There's no doubt shock sells, look at Cannibal Corpse, Emperor and the Black Metal masses, but old and worn shock ain't worth shit. Neither is this album. **www.waspnation.com** Jeff

SEPULTURA: *NATION*-ROADRUNNER RECORDS

I have a lot of respect for **Sepultura** and I think 'Nation' is the result of creating and executing as a full band. They could easily release rehash and been there, done that music but they're still trying to explore and push the parameters that they, through the years, helped smash. 'Nation' still has a bit of the 'Against' vibe, but the new ground they break via tracks like "The Ways Of Faith" and "Revolt" fit nicely with the aggressive "One Man Army" and the call to arms "Sepulnation". I won't even try to say I like this as much as the majority of the Max era **Sepultura**, but for what they've done, what they do and, most important, what they have still yet to conquer, they're still very strong and show no signs of slowing down. **www.sepultribe.com** =Tom=

REGURGITATE: *CARNIVOROUS ERECTION*-RELAPSE RECORDS

Extreme. What more is there to say about **Regurgitate**? If you like the fastest and wretched shit ever, this is for you. I personally didn't care for it. With a release like this it's almost like you've got to say it's cool. Well, it's not that cool, it's just extreme. Jeff

GOD DETHRONED: *RAVENOUS*-METAL BLADE RECORDS

Things seem to be going the right way for **God Dethroned**. And 'Ravenous' sees them improve even more, this time in the song writing department as this is some of their most memorable and original material to date. "The Crown Of The Morbid" and "Autumn Equinox" are proof, cool Death cover song too(Evil Dead). Jeff

JUNGLE ROT: *DEAD AND BURIED*-OLYMPIC RECORDINGS

Progression in the realm of Death Metal is either one that succeeds massively or it's the death of the band itself. And before you mistake the word progression for "selling out" or "whimping out", let me just say the answer is none of the above. Incorporating, for lack of better word, a core-ish sound to their arsenal **Jungle Rot** are expanding and the results are still killer. **JR** has always had it's unique brand of Death Metal with groove parts, 'Dead And Buried' has just taken them to a new level. Old school fans are still treated to some of the best straight forward Death Metal around, but there's something here that demands the listeners attention, more than before. =Tom=

BORIS: *ABSOLUTEGO*-SOUTHERN LORD RECORDS

I don't even know what to say about this. Track one of the disc lasts for 65 minutes! Low, feedback, Doom, noise that's pretty fucking spacelike, drone, pot, weird, low end explosion, Vicoden, trance, Japanese, loud, original, Jim Beam, buy! **www.southernlord.com** =Tom=

UNRESTRAINED!: *ISSUE 15*-MAG

Every issue gets better and I have no idea how they're going to top this! **Unrestrained!** is the creation of Adam Wasylyk and Adrian Bromley and if you haven't seen a copy of this mag, you're not into Metal. This issue contains the be all end all report on Black Metal. Where it's been, where it's at and where it's headed. In this section alone you get reviews with Emperor, Zyklon, Darkthrone, Mayhem, Dimmu Borgir, Satyricon and American BM report and more! Also in the issue, Destroyer666, Cathedral, Amorphis, The Forsaken, Internal Void etc. 80 pages, reviews up the ass, one of the best Metal magazines anywhere. Info: **U! c/o Adam W 5625 Glen Erin Dr. Unit 57 Mississauga, ON. CANADA** or **unrest@home.com** =Tom=

SKINLESS: *FORESHADOWING OUR DEMISE*-RELAPSE RECORDS

Talk about a hype machine gone awry. I've seen major prerelease hype on **Skinless** and this album, and listening to it for the fifth time in a row, I can't see what the big fucking deal is. Dime a dozen is a term that instantly comes to mind while listening to tracks like "Smothered" and "Pool Of Stool". I just think this is super typical and nothing special, especially when there's money being spent. **www.4skinless.com** Jeff

END IT: *KEEP SWINGIN'*-SELF RELEASED 6 TRACKS

This is the second release we've received from these guys and I'm just blown away. I haven't heard many US bands take the obvious Swedish Death influence and fuse it with pure American aggression and walk away triumphant. Well **End It** are doing just that and this is one of the best

demo releases I've heard in years. Like I said, Swedish influences, but that doesn't mean an overly melodic walk through the park, no these guys are like Entombed with speed and aren't afraid to experiment a little, fuck they just kill! Great sound, killer mix and this is about as highly recommended as they come. **End It 180 Rosetta. Auburn Hills, MI. 48326** or **endit@angelfire.com** =Tom=

PSYCHOMANCER: *SI-KO-MAN-SUR*-CURSED PRODUCTIONS
Those who yearn for Death Metal 1992 will want to check this out. Pure old school, acid gargle vocals and a healthy dose of Doom inspiration is what this album is all about. While it reminds me of Cianide, more melodic but still a bit similar, it's pretty cool. =Tom=

NIFELHEIM: *SERVENTS OF DARKNESS*-BLACKSUN RECORDS
I'd like to dedicate this review to the pussies that think The Haunted and Soilwork and Witchery etc. is what Swedish Metal is all about. Welcome to your nightmare as **Nifelheim** carry the torch of Satanic Chaos Metal into the new Metal millenium. 'Servants Of Darkness' is everything an extreme Metal album should be. From blazing speed to Maiden-esque guitar harmonies to the speed of Satan's favorite sons, this is their finest hour. Find it, buy it, FUCK OFF. =Tom=

MURDER SQUAD: *UNSANE, INSANE AND MENTALLY DERANGED*-PAVEMENT MUSIC
Fucking amazing! The project band of Entombed and Dismember members is just a killer display of pure Death Metal. Great feel to the tracks, very loose and super heavy, just a record that kicks ass from start to finish. They dedicate the album to Autopsy for influence and even began the band years ago jamming their songs. Cool album, cool packaging. =Tom= **bloodfreaks@hotmail.com**

SPIRIT CARAVAN: *ELUSIVE TRUTH*-TOLOTTA RECORDS
With the release of 'Jug Fulla Sun' Scott "Wino" Weinrich, Gary Isom and Dave Sherman, collectively known as **Spirit Caravan**, rose above all odds and laid the foundation for the unexpected. The unexpected has arrived in the form of 'Elusive Truth' and it contains more doom, rock, soul and just full on vibe than any record I've heard in years. The unmistakable voice and just heavy ass jams are so present and each time I listen to this album I just crave it even more. If you're a fan of The Obsessed, St. Vitus or anything Wino's done since he wrote his first song at the age of ten!, well check this out. **www.spiritcaravan.com** or **www.tolotta.com** =Tom=

AMORPHIS: *AM UNIVERSUM*-RELAPSE RECORDS
Love them or hate them, there is no band like **Amorphis**. From their earliest beginnings to their current, might I say, untouchable status, they simply follow no one and their latest is no exception to the rule. They've once again seemed to up the ante as far as acceptability in the Metal/Rock scene with songs like "Shatters Within", "Veil Of Sin" and "Grieve Stricken Heart", they're moving on and obviously making themselves and their die hard fans very happy. This is definitely not for the luke warm **Amorphis** fan as this is nothing but boiling. Dave

DIES IRAE: *IMMOLATED*-METAL BLADE RECORDS
Boasting some of Poland's best extreme Metal musicians, **Dies Irae** should be catapulted to the top of the Metal compost heap in blast beat fashion. While the Vader comparisons will be aplenty, **Dies Irae** does a damn good job of delivering a soild album of straight forward Death Metal that the majority of Vader, Decapitated, Devilyn fans will surely embrace. Dave

EMPEROR: *EMPERIAL LIVE CEREMONY*-CANDLELIGHT RECS
Unless you've been living under a rock, this is the live album that's been out for ages in Europe. Now it's here in the US. If you are a fan of **Emperor**, I suggest picking this up, it's a live album, but an interesting on to sy the least. "I Am The Black Wizards, Inno A Satana" etc, all the hits are here plus CD ROM Video. DW

ADVERSARY: *FORSAKEN*-CURSED PRODUCTIONS
It's been a long time since I heard any music from **Adversary**, so this was a cool assignment. Listening to this album for the fifth time it's obvious they've come a long way since the cyber-death days, but one thing that hasn't changed is the intention. To me their intentions are just to play heavy ass Death Metal the way it's been played for years and years, brutal! It's also obvious that they're not for everyone, but for those who like their Metal like they like their Women, straight, then dropping your hard earned cash on an **Adversary** release is wise. Dave **www.cursedproductions.com**

AMON AMARTH: *THE CRUSHER*-METAL BLADE RECORDS
Certainly a band totally coming into their own is **Amon Amarth**. From the raw, somewhat limited 'Once Sent...' album to this is just an amazing growing process. This is a fucking blistering display of Swedish Death Metal that is way more aggressive than melodic and really leaves no stone unturned. From "Masters Of War" to "A Fury Divine" to their cover of Possessed's "Eyes Of Horror" this is worth every cent. **www.amonamarth.com** =Tom=

DIECAST: *DAY OF RECKONING*-NOW OR NEVER RECORDS
I've been reading a lot about these guys in the past few months. And whenever that happens it can be tough to listen to just the music. Well I can say a lot of the accolades are right on because Boston's **Diecast** are offering up their own and pretty original slice of the Metal-Core pie. If you're a fan of Hatebreed or any of the bands blending a healthy dose of Death Metal and Hardcore, this kills. **www.bhcdiecast.com** =Tom=

TECHNOCRACY: *S/T*-3 TRX CD
This disc, while only three songs, is definitely a grower. It's got a NIN type vibe, but at the same time way more Metal in structure and style. I'm sure live is where this band really shines, but for this disc I really like track two, "Cancer", as it seems to capture a cool vibe and has some cool lead and backing vocals. **Technocracy** will have a full length out later this year. **www.technocracynow.com** Tom=

BURNT BY THE SUN: *S/T*-RELAPSE RECORDS
Formed from the ashes of New Jersey's Human Remains, **Burnt By The Sun** are somewhat in the same vein as their former band. They're still fast and precice as fucking hell but unfortunately nowhere near as memorable. Jeff

VIO-LENCE

...Psychotic Memories...

It was 1988 and without a doubt, Thrash Metal was at it's peak. 1985, 86 and 87 had laid the foundation for what seemed like the ultimate Summer of Thrash. One such bill set to go coast to coast was proof of this. Canadian futuristic pioneers Voi-Vod, San Francisco's fast rising Testament and new comers Vio-Lence. That summer was the first time I heard and saw Vio-Lence. And truth be told, they weren't hard to miss. Not only was their debut **'Eternal Nightmare'** ***was coming out on a new label, Mechanic, which was an offshoot of the major label MCA, but they had established themselves in the underground via demo's. If you were around in the scene at that time, you couldn't miss the promotion surrounding*** **'Eternal Nightmare'.** ***Now we all know Voi Vod were forced to cancel when it was revealed their Guitarist Piggy announced he had Cancer. He's fine now. A few weeks before they were due to play Chicago's Vic Theatre, I decided to pick up the groups debut,*** **'Eternal Nightmare'.** ***I was floored. Obviously this album and this band weren't for everybody. But for some reason, they were perfect for me. The follow up's to 'Eternal' were 1990's*** **'Oppressing The Masses'** ***and 1992's*** **'Nothing To Gain'** ***and again, not for everyone. The "classic" line up of Demmel, Flynn, Killian, Strickland and Dell is what I will concentrate on. Like I said they weren't for everybody, but this retrospective is for the people who cared.***

"Phobophobia"
Sean Killian/Vocals
02/13/2001

Midwest Metal: First question would be what were you doing before Vio-Lence?

Just working, really. I was working at a place where processed cars that came out of Japan, they were Subaru's and Phil [Demmel-G] and Deen [Dell-B] worked there too.

But you had never been in any bands previously, right?

No, none at all.

What possessed you to get together with them?

Well because I knew them from work and I'd heard them a few times at clubs like Ruthie's Inn and places like that. I thought they were pretty cool and like I said they were friends of mine.

So when you decided to join, who was in the band at the time?

Phil, Troy Fua, Deen and Perry [Strickland-D].

What kind of stuff were they doing at the time?

Basically the first album stuff.

What happened with Troy?

Jeez, I was only in the band maybe four months and Perry and Phil were like "we've got this other guy who's gonna join the band" and I was like, "Ah, alright" ya, know? And the other guy they were talking about was Robb [Flynn-G]. A few weeks after that we played a show with Forbidden (who, at the time, were known as Forbidden Evil-Ed.) and Robb was in that band, so I got a chance to see him play.

Once Robb joined the band and the "classic" line up was in place, how would you describe the first jam?

It was great. Jamming with Robb was totally cool. It was a big difference, things got way more professional. Robb knew all the stuff we were working on because Phil gave him a tape. It was probably that night we played with them, Ha Ha.

I'd like to get into not only the "infamous" demo that led to Vio-Lence being signed, but also the shows the band were doing and the scene you guys came up in.

Well personally the first show, well not the first show, but the first ever serious show I ever went to was Slayer at the Keystone in Berkley. Now at the time I really didn't know anything about no Slayer! I was into Savatage and more traditional stuff like that. So before they went on I was standing, like hella close to the stage (laughing hard), and when they went on everything just exploded! And I was like "What the fuck is this"?! That was my first taste of that scene. The from there you'd see Slayer like once a month, Metallica the same. Then came Megadeth. Metallica at Ruthie's Inn and Muhaby Gardens were some great shows. Cliff and I went to high school together.

No shit?

Yeah, we went to Castro Valley High. So I'd seen Cliff jamming with his early bands in the courtyard of our school. When he joined Metallica I teched for him a few times, in Sacramento and in

San Francisco when they played with Megadeth.

Was that the big New Year's Eve show? Right before 'Master Of Puppets' came out?

Yeah, I think it was New Year's Eve. That was a killer show. Exodus were also on the bill. But it was cool because I was totally young looking to, ya know, just rock out and shit. Cliff Burton lived in Castro Valley and I knew him from school, and it was very cool time and I was lucky to sort of tag along. But getting back to **Vio-Lence**, the first show I did with them, man, I'll bet I only knew like 30% of the words (laughing)! I just went up there and thrashed and roared! That was our first show, there was maybe like 20 people there. But we got better, we got Robb in the band, got the demo out, that's when things picked up.

Weather people liked or hated you guys, essentially Vio-Lence just happened to be in the right place at the right time

Totally! It was perfect timing, the Thrash shit was hot and it helped we were a little different than most other bands. But no middle ground, you either loved us or hated us. And a lot of it was due to me, reading the press stuff back then and when the album came out, it was either people bashing the shit out of me or the other side were people with a crucifix and me hanging on it (laughing) because we did holy things for them!

Now I remember reading press back then and all you heard was bands like Vio-Lence drawing just huge crowds at local shows. Again, was this product of the environment or what?

Well to begin with we had a couple of shows we opened, and were seen by just tons of people. One of those were supporting Exodus at The Stone, great crowd and we were able to win some people over. Back then there were a lot of bands and it was like throwing spaghetti at the wall, whatever sticks, ya know?

Well as far as getting such shows and all, did you guys have a lot of contacts or what? All bands seem to know at the early stage is music.

Well first and foremost, that's all we were music fans. We loved this kind of music. You see bands, more so today, but kids getting into music just to become rockstars. It really has little to do with the love of the music, it's just for the money or fame or whatever. We loved music, my collection speaks for itself, it has to! My stuff goes from Harry Connick, Jr. to Slayer. Same with Phil (Demmel), the guy's a walking jukebox! Ask him any song from any era, he can either hum it or play it. So us being fans early really helped us be successful, it made us hungry to work very hard at it.

All of a sudden due to the buzz, the demo, the shows there was some label interest, what was the mindset of the band at the time?

Well it was kind of like "Whoa", ya know? But we were very much punk kids and while we couldn't be more excited at what was going on around us, we had Debbie (Abono-Fmr manager) and Joey (Huston-fmr-manager) were really handling all the communication. I mean there were offers and counter offers, but as the band we only heard about these things after the fact, so they'd come to us and say "here's where we're at, this is where it ends". We had two strong offers, Joey and Debbie didn't think they'd go any further so it was like "What do you guys think"?

Now obviously one of the labels was Mechanic and the other?

Yeah, MCA/Mechanic and Combat Records.

Which brings us to the Mechanic days. Being fresh to it all what were some of the pro's and con's to being on the label?

Um, the pro's were they were totally behind us. Steve Sinclair was totally psyched on us, just starting his label, he had some powerful backing and distribution.

Now being realistic all these years later, did 'EN' do *that* well? I mean being a fan in 1988 I didn't really care, but now I'm very interested in knowing.

Not comparatively, maybe not, but it did great for us with getting on the road. I mean it got us great publicity, Steve was relying and having **Vio-Lence** carry his label.

How I found out about Vio-Lence was on the 1988 Testament tour. Let's talk about that, I mean that had to be the ultimate!

Classic. That was a blast.

What do you remember most?

It was an eye opening experience! Man, we were in a van, no trailer, shit was just packed everywhere, on the roof and all that. Traveling was painful, but once we got there, it was awesome, I mean how often do you get the chance to drive state to state and when you reach your destination everyone's like your friend or wanted to party? Plus, touring with Testament who were pulling in massive amounts of people, Testament were doing awesome at that time and we were the upstarts with our debut. And like you mentioned, the publicity behind us made people interested in seeing what was up with **Vio-Lence**.

The Chicago stop at the Vic you couldn't do the show. So Robb and Phil sang that night.

Man, yeah, the Vic and M.O.D. were on the bill that night as well. Anyway I had this inner ear infection and I

IN PERSON

AND

SAT. DEC. 3, 1988 2:00 P.M.

AT

Wild Rags
MONTEBELLO

LP'S/CASSETTES
SALE $5.99

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EXPIRES 12/5/88

VOI VOD AND **VIOLENCE**
APPEARING AT **FENDER'S BALLROOM** SAT. DEC. 3, 1988
W/**FORBIDDEN AND ADONIS**

couldn't even stand up! I took a shower that morning and knew something was wrong, I was puking in the shower and went to find the road manager. I couldn't even stand up, so they went on, they did a killer job!

Later in '88 you finally got to tour with Voi-Vod. How'd that tour go?

It was cool, it wasn't as exciting, but it was cool. Chicago, at The Cubby Bear was a killer fucking show. Ya know I was watching some sitcom the other night and they went into some bar in Chicago and it was the fucking Cubby Bear! I was like "No fucking way, we played there"(laughing)!

From there you guys split from Mechanic and went to Megaforce.

Fuck Johnny Z. I'll never shake that dude's hand, man. That guy wasn't into music, I don't know what the fuck he was into, he was into Anthrax that's what he was into. We had problems with that guy from day one. During 'Oppressing The Masses' he was so critical and wanted me to sing like Joey from Anthrax, he'd be like "listen to him, you can hear every word" and shit like that.

You did a headlining tour with Defiance in support for 'OTM', how was that?

That was cool, we had some great nights, we had some shitty nights too. We'd finally got to tour in a bus, so that was cool. We had a few shows where we ran into Flotsam And Jetsam so those shows were real good.

With all the problems going on, what was the vibe going in to write 'Nothing To Gain'?

Not too good, we had tons of pressure from the label, they wanted to hear a lot of demos of the stuff and that sucked. The album itself, I still like the music, if I were to do it over I would've done the vocals a little more hard, but the mix really sucked. Mike Rosen fucking sucked at mixing. We fucked up by not using Alex Perialas again like we did for 'Oppressing..', but that was due to pressure by Jonny Z. not to use him.

Really?

Yeah, he didn't want us to use him, he was pushing for Michael Rosen. I just don't think Michael was ready for us, where Alex was driving and pushing us, he knew how to handle not only us as a band, but as individuals as well.

Now 'Nothing To Gain' is recorded, but now it sits!

Yeah, they [Megaforce] were just like "fuck you, we're not putting it out". And we were like, so give it back to us then. And by that time the morale of the band was just shitty. Between the time Phil was speaking to Bleeding Hearts Records about getting the album out, I'd left the band. So I was out of the band by the time it ever came out. But Phil did a lot to get that out, but it was a little to late. Robb had left, then Perry left then I left. With Perry it was like "whatever dude, later", I mean no one knew who the fuck the drummer was anyway (laughs)! I mean you've got to be like Dave Lombardo for anyone to really care. I remember one night in New York, I think, me and Deen and Perry were out in the club after soundcheck, the doors opened and we were talking to kids and stuff and this kid starts going on how bad ass our drummer is and all that and I was like "tell him yourself, you're standing right next to him"(laughing)! And the kid just looks at him and say's "Wow, you look so normal". Me and Deen just about died and I tormented him about it forever, even if I'll see him to this day I'll fuck with him about it.

After Robb left to concentrate on, his then side project, Machine Head what did you think of their success?

I thought it was great. Robb was really coming into his own as a musician and at that time I think he was like "I just want to be Robb". He had his own ideas about not only music, but lyrics and everything that surrounds a band. We even played a show with MH!

That's right, I remember seeing the fliers, years later of course.

Yeah, Robb had to headline though (laughing)! But that was cool, it was a good night.

To close your portion of this out, what would be your overview of Vio-Lence?

Well as far as music, it was just five guys who were playing what they wanted to hear and not caring what was going on around them, meaning the labels and the bullshit. With me, Phil, Robb, Deen and Perry it was just us having a blast and I wouldn't trade those memories for anything.

"Calling In The Coroner"
Robb Flynn/Guitars
02/28/2001

Midwest Metal: Before Vio-Lence you played in Forbidden, I guess we should start there, because before then would just be garage bands?

Robb Flynn: Forbidden was my garage band! But it was me and a drummer who now plays in this Punk band out here called The Mr.T Experience. Me and him were jamming and we'd just discovered the joys of drinking a six pack and listening to Metallica! So we started off just trying to emulate Metallica, just covering Kill 'Em All stuff, we liked Sabbath and all that. We'd play at a friends party or something, playing Slayer or Metallica stuff and a bunch of older, biker kind of guys would be like "Play Zeppelin"! And, of course, we'd be like "Those guys suck"(laughing)!

Now as the band evolved, who was in the band before you left?

Uh, it was Russ, Craig, Paul, Matt.

Wow, I didn't know it was basically their "classic" line up.

Yeah, pretty much. We were playing clubs as I was like 17 maybe, we were getting snuck in to play and then after the show just getting hammered, drinking Mickey's and doing Crank.

When were you aware of Vio-Lence?

They started practicing in the same building as us, we may have done a show together, I can't remember. But they were playing by us and I met Phil and we became drinking friends, pretty much, and one night he invited me to check them out. I was checking them out and they went into the middle riff of "Eternal Nightmare", the bass line part, and I was just like "FUCK"! I was blown away, I mean that was like one of the heaviest things I'd ever heard at the time. So from there I was a fan.

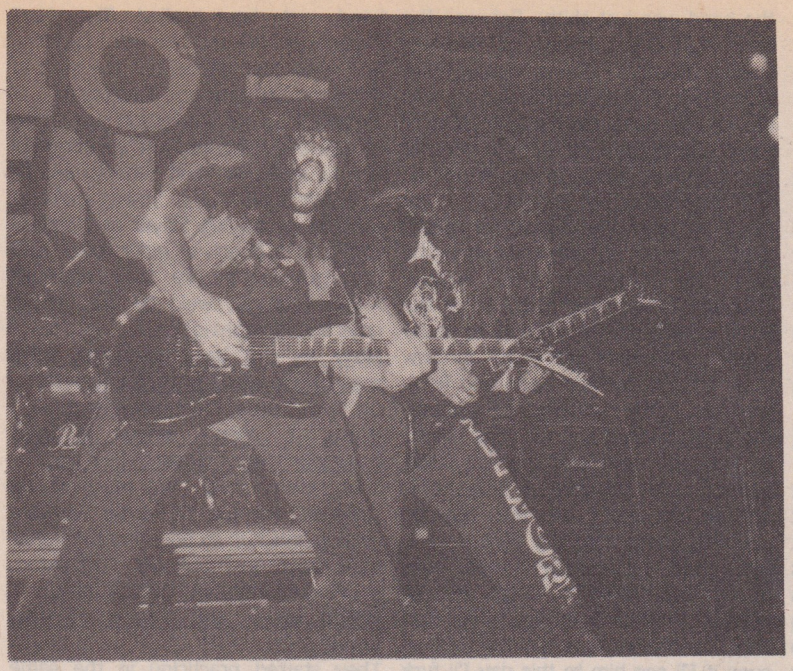
What was it like when the classic line up first jammed?

It was kinda weird. I mean I had quit Forbidden, and while I was in that band we were like Eighteen years old and crank/speed freaks, just doing lines like there was no tomorrow! But I quit because I was having some problems in the band and the first night I jammed with **Vio-Lence**, the guys from Forbidden came by to try and talk me back into the band. So it was like hella drama the first night!

So how long after did it feel right, like a "this is it" sort of feeling?

Well I think one of the first real practices we had we wrote "Torture Tactics" which was a riff I brought in. So I brought it to them and they totally dug it. We started fucking around and we tried to steal "Chalice Of Blood", we stole that riff and it was originally called "Calling In The Coroner"! But after awhile I was like "man,we can't do this, it's lame", so I wrote another song, and that became "Calling In The Coroner".

Classic! That was the hit!



(Laughing) The hit?

Fuck yeah, if it were released today it'd come with a sticker saying featuring "Calling In The Coroner"!

I guess kinda (laughing)!

There was a lot of press noticing the area and obviously a ton of bands, why do you think you guys, well, made it?

Well to begin with, I knew the chemistry of what we were trying to do was right. I mean the five of us would walk into a room and we had to be the center of attention (laughs), it had to be all eyes on us and our chemistry just ended up working like that. And we just wanted to be the craziest, the fastest, uh, Thrashiest (laughing) whatever band we could, and we had Phil. I mean if it wasn't for that guy then half of the shit that happened wouldn't have, and that's the fucking truth, man. He carried this band, a lot.

Was he the guy to deal with the mail, tape trading and all that?

That was, well me and Deen were at the bottom of the totem pole, I was actually above Deen (laughs), I actually managed to claw my way above Deen (laughing)! When I first joined the band Phil, Perry and Sean pretty much called the shots, but if you really wanted to get technical about it, it was Phil. He was the man, he could talk to people, he could talk business and everyone was OK with it because he did it so well.

How about the demo that led to the band getting picked up?

Yeah, we went in and did the demo and it garnered a lot of interest I think because we were offering up something different, nobody sounded like **Vio-Lence**, at all. Sure riff wise it was total Bay Area, a lot of Slayer mixed into it, but we had Sean and no one sounded like Sean. That plus the fact that he had an attitude and so did the rest of us, that all seemed to really help. But getting signed, we really didn't know too much of what was going on, that was our managers.

How did you hook up with both Joey Huston and Debbie Abono?

Joey was our original manager and we hooked up with him soon after I joined

Now at the time was he managing a lot of bands or what?

No, Joey was just our friend, he was like eighteen or nineteen and he had one of those fancy college edumacations (laughing), and the rest of us were just out of or dropping out of high school. But he was a few years older and considerably smarter.

So those two did all the dealing and Vio-Lence are signed to Mechanic. What do you remember about that time period?

Yeah, we were stoked to be signed, I know it was like a brand new label, there was only like one other band on it, and they totally sucked, so we were the best thing they had. And they were just hella into it, Steve Sinclair was the man and he was really into Sean and Phil, he really got off on their attitude and charisma. Then there was the demo giveaway, I mean every magazine we picked up there was a full page ad, giving the demo to any and everyone.

Were a lot of people jealous of you guys back then, MCA and all?

Well, it was kind of a weird time in the Bay Area, I don't remember all the bands that got signed or the order they were signed in, but I do know we were signed before Forbidden. They were our arch rivals, so we always kept an eye on them (laughs)! But like I said it was weird, we were a part of the third wave, first was Metallica, then Possessed/Testament days and then Death Angel/**Vio-Lence** days. By then it was less of a community and nowadays it's even more of a rivalry.

The Testament tour!

That's where, well for me, that was my induction to everything! I mean I'd already done drugs and done tons of drinking, but at that point, going on tour and all of a sudden you throw groupies and more drugs and more drinking into it all! And we were all like nineteen and all of us and our stuff was crammed into the van, no hotels, crashing out on people's floors and shit like that. Debbie came out with us for a few dates and those ruled because we'd get to eat at Denny's. We'd just eat as much as humanly possible and hopefully we'd eat at the show, but we had absolutely no spending money. We weren't making anything, that's for sure, maybe we made $50 a night. And while it was rough with the driving, I mean we'd pull up, have to unload our stuff, play for a ½ hour, I'd stop playing, put my guitar in it's case and start loading everything again. The drives could suck, but if you were in the back seat of the van, you were in heaven because there were only two people back there. Halfway through the tour, as soon as we entered Texas, middle of the Summer mind you, the air conditioning broke! So the next week and a half it's 115 degrees out and we're driving and everyone's dying and crabby and all you hear is "STOP SWEATING ON ME"!

Later that year was the Voi-Vod tour, finally, again what do you remember?

Well that was the eye opener! I mean Testament were really big at the time, 'The New Order' and they were on fire! We went out on that tour and ya know we were like "you know this tour wouldn't be doing half as good if it wasn't for us (laughing)" that kind of shit, ya know? We thought we were Led Zeppelin, the biggest and best thing since sliced bread. So the Voi-Vod tour, we go out and reality really

smacks us in the face. That tour was pretty dismal, not a lot of people at the shows, still loading and unloading our selves, in a van, but with a trailer

But all in all it was like a night and day difference.

Yeah, you know what happened, between the two tours I got hit by a car while skateboarding. So I fucked up my back, so that tour I just thrashed my back, bad. I couldn't get enough pills or booze to try and control the pain. So I was doing it up hella hard, still lots of girls. We started having contests at that time who could get the most girls.

Oh yeah, who'd win?

Phil. I mean come on, he was the social butterfly of the band, he could talk to anyone convincingly. And back then Phil was also the mediator of the band.

What do you mean?

Well it was like me, Deen on one side and Perry and Sean on the other and Phil had to tow both lines.

OK, this takes us to writing for 'Oppressing The Masses', at what point did Mechanic flake out?

I really don't remember, I know we were unhappy with them, but I really don't ever remember separating from them. It's was like one minute we're with them and the next we were on Megaforce. **Vio-Lence**, in the Bay Area, was pretty fucking huge, so I kinda had like carte blanche and I was like twenty and it was great, drinking, doing speed etc. So the writing is a bit of a blur, and in that blur we got dropped and were now on Megaforce and I was like "cool".

I'm going to ask all of you, but in your opinion, do you think 'Eternal Nightmare' did that well back then, 88/89?

Well for a major label, it did horrible! At the time MCA had tons of bands selling millions and we sold like 30,000. That was 30,000 worldwide, so it was like "later".

With 'Oppressing' coming out you had a much bigger role in the band, writing a lot and working very well with Phil, it had to be a cool time?

Yeah, we went to Ithaca, NY. To record with Alex Perialas at Pyramid Studios and I was in Heaven. I mean he had done so much and he did the first S.O.D. album which I thought, and still think that guitar sound was just retarded! Heavy as hell. But at the same time we fired Debbie and it was my job to do it because I was dating her daughter. So they elected me to do it and I did it. So the recording of the album was a lot of ups and downs. Cool because we're with Alex and the down because we had the personal stuff with Debbie hanging over us. But the recording of it was ragingly fun! Still doing speed and living like maniacs every night, made a ton of friends. Phil and I totally complemented each other. I remember writing "I Profit", Phil and I writing "Officer Nice" and the title track. I remember hating "Engulfed By Flames", that was written very fast.

When the record came out, were expectations super high, new deal, management and all?

When it came out, I think we felt we were hitting our stride. We were shooting a video ["World In A World"], and it was like "Wow! We're shooting a video, we've got a new manager".

Now who was that?

This guy named Jerry Adamane who played like he was some Hollywood hotshot who was actually the worst scumbag on Earth. But when the album came out we played and sold out two back to back nights in our hometown at the Omni and The Stone. We then went out on a headlining tour with Defiance in support, which was real cool. We had a bus, our first bus, which was great. We were able to get more girls with that, so we still had some good times on that tour. I think I'd stopped doing speed for that tour.

Now 's the time where it's rough waters, correct?

Yeah, that tour was basically the beginning of the end.

Business, personality or what?

Everything. We had then realized our big Hollywood manager was nothing but a scam artist, we're spending money, that we didn't even have, hand over fist, no one's making any money in the band, nothing. And there were always tensions in the band like I mentioned earlier, but at this time the canyon was widening. We were set to do another tour which was dubbed the Disastour! It was a headlining thing, we should've had a bus, but we find out at the last minute it's an RV with a few friends following us in a van with the equipment. So Jerry tells us "I've got you guys doing some stuff, but the first show is with Alien Sex Fiend", and we're like "What, who, why them"? and he's like "They're huge, it'll be good". So he tells us the tour begins on the 25th so we have to leave on the 20th to get to Florida. We wanted to fly, but no go. So it's like the 19th and he calls in a panic, "Oh my god, I made a mistake, the tour starts on the 23rd"! And now we've got three days to get from San Francisco to Florida! So all of us just pile in and go.

Ala Airplane, you were probably like "I picked a damn good time to stop doing speed"!

Oh, by that time I was back on it! So we make it, three days straight, four hour shifts, get to the gig, clean up and go on stage. Dude, the whole place just stood there, they were all total Alien Sex Fiend fans and didn't want to hear any of what we had to offer. I mean we'd finish a song and you could hear them whispering in the corner. We make it three shows later to Miami and the RV is basically melting. We lift the hood and all the plastic, rubber gaskets and clamps and whatever else was plastic has now melted and molded together. So we play the show and rent a car to get to the next show in Atlanta. So we're in Atlanta, play the show, it was cool and something was wrong with the rental car. So we call the place and they're like "You're where? You can't leave the state with that car! That's stealing we're calling the cops"! And we're like "What the fuck"? The tour's over, we have no money, Jerry has cut all communication with us, dude he didn't change his number, he disconnected every phone he had! Our booking agent drops us that same day and we're in Tallahassee, Florida stranded. We had $159.00 each to get home and eat for however long it took to get home. Those guys all took a bus home, five days on the road back. I borrowed money from Debbie Abono actually, I swore to God to pay her back if she'd just loan me $300. She did and I paid her back with my first royalty check from Machine Head years later.

Where did that leave you with Megaforce?

Well we were still with them, the record didn't really do shit, maybe 20,000. And at that time Johnny Z was coming in and wanted to change us into this, like a Testament type band. And I was like "we are what we are, we're a Thrash band with a singer who can't sing, but he's really, really good at screaming like a lunatic and writing songs about killing and torture and all that".

So you start writing 'Nothing To Gain' and this was to be issued through Megaforce.

Yeah, we got Michael Rosen producing and Vinnie [Wojno], who later engineered the first and second MH records, this is where we met him. So

we start doing it and it's, we're all just fighting like crazy, like every single day, and no one can see eye to eye.

Everyone really bags on the 'NTG' album, I like some of the songs, but I will say the sound is shit. What songs did you write or co-write?

There were a few songs, I think I wrote "Atrocity", the songs that were down tuned I wrote, that's right when I was getting into down tuning. There was a lot of collaborating with Phil, I remember we were trying to stay away from writing fast and other bullshit.

Now I'll ask Phil the same thing, but do you think, at this time, he was caving in to some of the pressure from Megaforce, etc.?

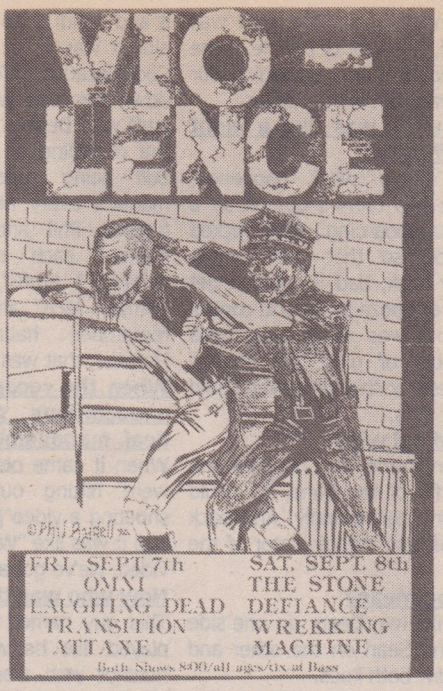
Well, the thing that started happening was that Perry and Sean started becoming more and more the shot callers. He [Phil] was just kinda getting beat down because the two of them were always ganging up on him. Don't get me wrong everyone was still looking to him for final decisions, but at that point those two thought they knew best, so, they kinda started steering the ship.

So you turn in 'Nothing To Gain'.

They heard it and we got dropped.

Ok, you're done with Megaforce, where is the band at now?

Well, we're still together, still gonna try and write, but there's obviously some thinking to be done. It's weird though, in the Bay Area we still had a very good reputation. At the time **Vio-Lence** was still one of the more notorious bands out there, I remember one show we did with Death Angel, we'd been dropped at the time, and we, for a lack of better word, started a riot, it was crazy. But like I was saying we had a name we could fall back on, but behind the scenes it was getting pretty ugly. We'd gotten a new manager named Alexis Olsen and we had this new deal for 'Nothing To Gain' pending and it seemed pretty solid and I was waiting for that to happen. But at this point I was quite unhappy and I was just like "Whoever's steering the ship now is an idiot (laughing)"! But there was a lot of fighting, more than before. And now I had learned a lot along the way, ya know, what we should be doing a little more. I started bringing in songs, which I later used for Machine Head, like "Blood For Blood", "Death Church", and both got rejected because they were "too heavy" and **Vio-Lence** was trying to go even more accessible direction and I thought that was crazy. I think we



lasted another six months together and then that deal that we were waiting for fell through, so at that point I said to them "I'm starting a side project called Machine Head, and that's what I'm gonna do". Everyone was cool with it. Right about that same time I ended up getting into a fight with this pretty bad gang, they were from our neighborhood and used to hang out at this club we'd go to. For some reason I got accused of stabbing someone, and I had nothing to do with a stabbing. I was in a fight, but I didn't do that shit. But it was a rumor and these guys wanted to kill me, literally. **Vio-Lence** was supposed to do a show and this gang was calling up the club and were doing bomb threats and just fucked up shit. So the day after I tell them I'm doing this side project, this shit happens! The show was the next day and I said "I'm not doing the show", it just wasn't gonna happen. So we got into this big fight and I just quit. And it was weird. It was a crazy ending and I was out on my own. They'd changed the locks on the rehearsal studio and I talked my way into there to get my stuff out. They were hella pissed!!

Were you surprised that they continued without you?

Yeah, I was! It's all my ego of course. But like I said they still had a good name with or without me, especially in the area, but that could only continue for so long. But we all hated each other for fucking ever, lots of shit talking and all that. I was bitter for a long time, but success may have eased it, ya know? I mean **Vio-Lence**, 30,000 was our biggest record and I've done way more than that. So I'll be the first to admit that being able to rub that in their faces was a good feeling.

Sean brought up the fact they you both were able to do a show together. *That you headlined!*

Dude, that was, at the time, my crowning achievement (laughing)! At that time their reputation still preceded them and I was speaking to them through Debbie, who was managing them again. So Debbie was trying to get me to do the show, and this was like days and days and I was like "Fuck that"! So a day or so passes and I told her like one hundred times no, so then I told her the only way I'd do it was if I headline. I told her equal money, no problem, but I am gonna headline!

In closing your section, how would you sum up the Vio-Lence years?

You know, there were a lot of phenomenal highs. I mean if I want to really think back I could get hella pissed because we got fucked, dude. To this day we don't own our own publishing, no one even knows who owns it, for all the records. I saw $5,800 in six years and that was due to a advance publishing deal before 'Nothing To Gain' came out, I got $4,000 up front and $300 for six months, that was it. For all those years and three records, that was the only money I saw. So shit like that will

make you think differently, it's brutal to get taken like that. But on the other hand, those were my wildest of times, I was just out of my mind. I definitely think, for me, it was an unbelievable learning experience and I learned a lot and I'm proud of everything we did. We carved a niche in history, it may have not been the biggest, but we made our mark. I mean any band where there's no middle ground, you either were a fucking die hard **Vio-Lence** fan or a "fuck off" type person. I mean some of the reviews were so bad I couldn't believe I was reading them, and we wanted to kill journalists! I think we were one of those bands that made enough of a statement that the people we touched and reached we really made an impact. I was bitter about the situation for a long time, but when I look back on those times, they were definitely good times, me Phil, Sean and Deen are still tight. Phil and I actually hang out quite a bit now and it's cool, it's really cool.

"Kill On Command"
Phil Demmel/Guitars
03/10/2001

Our typical starting point is what you were doing before Vio-Lence?

Phil Demmel: Well I had joined Death Penalty, which was pretty established at the time, it was Jerry (Burr-V), Troy, Eddie and Perry and they were in Death Penalty. So I had played with Perry and Jerry previously in a cover band, we were playing songs by Exciter, Slayer songs. But right before I hooked up with those guys I was with a group of friends I had grown up with, ya know, bounced back and forth with them in a band called Betrayal. That band was a little more instrumental, like Savatage, Accept, so that broke up and I was looking for something to do. So they were looking for a guitar player, I joined them, we played a party and before the next party we did Perry changed the name to **Vio-Lence**. We were **Vio-Lence** for about three months, then we lost Eddie and brought in Deen.

So Perry had a much bigger role than it seems?

Yeah, pretty much. It's funny, a lot of people think I formed the band and got everyone together, which isn't the case, but I just slowly took over. The songs we were playing at the time was a culmination of stuff friends of the band had written, stuff from past members and all that. So I come into the band and I write, ya know? So I started writing new songs and lyrics so I think that's where all that came from.

With so many changes that early on, what was it that made them leave?

Well we were all just out of High School, Eddie was the first to quit. He went to trade school in Arizona. But when he left we weren't shit, we played like two parties. Jerry was kind of the same thing, we'd done a few shows at clubs, we'd started to record a demo, but he soon left. Brought in Sean who proceeded to re write all my lyrics, which wasn't so bad (laughs)!

You guys were basically doing 'Eternal Nightmare' stuff, right?

Pretty much, we had "Kill On Command, Eternal Nightmare, Out For Blood", which ended up being "Paraplegic". I had lyrics to all those, before Sean. We wrote "Bodies On Bodies" right before Sean joined.

Now when does Robb come in? You obviously knew him from Forbidden Evil right?

Yeah, we shared a studio with a band called Annihilation, it was their place and we set up in front of them and we paid them a little rent. Forbidden Evil practiced around the corner, and we'd go and check them out, it was really our first introduction to another scene besides our own. We saw Robb play and Troy and I thought he was killer. So there was a lot of competition between bands and we were just too competitive for our own good! If we would've just been mellow and let things fall where they should've, but no we were into talking a lot of shit, way more than we should've. So right about the time they moved in there, Troy just wasn't cutting it, and we had some label interest. Desaster Records was into us and wanted to put us into the studio and we were kind of freaking out, our first label talk. So we approached Robb and said "We're not looking for a guitar player, we're not gonna audition people" and all that. If Robb didn't want to do it, we would've kept Troy, but he wanted to do it and it ended up working out, really good.

What was it like when the classic line up first got together to jam?

Well when Robb joined we were set to move to another place in Hayward. I had just written "Phobophobia" and at this new place we practiced across the hall from Testament. So when we'd start playing that song, a lot of people would be peeking and coming in and checking us out. I think that's what sold Robb on the band. So that was a good song to work on, this here will show you how petty we were! We really liked "Chalice Of Blood" a lot, it was Robb's music, so we started playing it and called it "Calling In The Coroner"(laughing)!

That's funny because Robb told the same story! Petty is right!

But we couldn't do it anymore, it was really bad. Robb had actually written a song for Forbidden called "Court Jester", which contained the beginning riff of "Torture Tactics", he brought that with him. The first month or month and a half we were working on stuff he had brought with him, so that was really refreshing to me, but also kind of threatening to me. I was like, "Oh cool", but I knew I had to come up with more music. It really got me off my ass for a while.

With the changes behind you, how long after Robb joined did you think "this is it"?

Maybe a month after him in the band we played out first show at The Stone, which was really an established club at the time. We opened for Heathen and got a really good response, the demo was out and we started getting mail from overseas, Steffan Chirazi got interested and wrote our first Kerrang! Article and that was like WOW!

What was everyone doing at the time, job wise?

Hmmm, 1986, (laughing) what was I doing? That's when I working at the Suburu place, I worked there with Sean, Deen, Zet (Steve Souza, ex-Legacy, Exodus), Eric (Peterson) from Testament, Deen's brother worked ther, there was about a good fifteen of us working this Teamster union job, making good money. It was an import place so my job was driving these brand new cars off the boat onto a pier, we'd be out there just beating the shit out of these cars (laughing)! But we managed to fuck that up and we all lost our jobs! Let's see, Perry was driving a street sweeper, and Robb really wasn't doing anything. I think he'd get little construction jobs if he needed some money. I remember he'd be like (in perfect Flynn gruff voice-Ed.)"I was picking up wood in the rain today and it fucking sucked"!

So you're doing shows, the demo is out, the press is sniffing around how did you guys stuck out?

I think our live show was really a big key. Deen was famous for just spazzing out live, just going off, we all did and people really just fed off that. Soon after word got around and it spread pretty fast. Live shows became

our staple. No one really wanted to open for us and even the tours that came through, Voi-Vod, Kreator, opening for Testament we did well and were able to hold our own.

Is this when did Joey and Debbie come into play for the band?

Yeah, pretty much. Joey was there from the beginning, he'd help us get shows, make fliers and he was like the sixth member of the band. We had him with us for awhile and Perry and Sean decided he wasn't going to "take us to the next level", which will become a recurring theme later in the story. But that's what they thought. Debbie had just started working with Forbidden. So we went and met with Exodus' manager Toni Isabella, who was pretty powerful. So we tried to one up Forbidden with her, and all she spoke about was percentages and money and really turned us off to her, quick. I had met Debbie and we totally hit it off, and she didn't mind handling both bands. She was really nice and was a fan, so it worked out great.

So things progress nicely with Debbie and Joey doing the dealings with labels and Vio-Lence gets signed to Mechanic. What was it like to work with Steve Sinclair?

Initially, it was great. He was totally into the band and had a lot of ideas, the demo give away was killer, that was our pre-production, so instantly we're doing stuff. We finished recording and were doing tons of press, I don't think any band could've wanted anything more.

The first thing up for the band is the massive 1988 Testament tour.

Yeah, I remember Testament really nervous because they had to headline on their 2nd album. But I remember just about every show being really good, I remember the feeling of just being on the road was really cool. Being in a van with some of the guys was not really cool, certain people were always bitching and complaining.

Now jamming next door to Testament and them being from the same area must have been a cool thing for the tour.

Yeah, it was. It helped take some of the nervousness and tensions out. We knew we'd be able to get a soundcheck and all that, I mean we'd all heard stories about the road. Where the headliners just fuck with the openers, they looked out for us. We'd done a few local shows to sort of kick the tour off, and we screwed ourselves by playing over our allotted time at one show, they shut us down and were pretty pissed off (laughs)!

Robb mentioned that the tour was his first chance to just go crazy, were you the same way?

(laughing) a little bit. I got a little too out of hand one too many nights. I remember one night in Baltimore, Chuck [Billy] dragged me down some stairs because I was drunk and acting stupid. As he's dragging me down the stairs, my head's hitting everything and he's dragging me through the mud saying "All right, he's had enough"! I woke up the next day all scarred up (laughing), but the other stuff, I had a girlfriend at the time, so some of that stuff, ya know?

And how about Texas with no air?

Man, that sucked! Actually on that tour, during the Texas leg, Testament flew back to NY to play the Megaforce Anniversary party with S.O.D., Anthrax, Over Kill etc. So when they did that, we got to spend a night or two on the bus, which was pretty cool. But once we got back in the van, it was bad news. With Perry wiping his boogers on the ceiling, it was just bad.

How was the driving spilt up?

Well Sean drove a little, Perry didn't drive at all. He had some bullshit about a suspended license or something, which Sean later on pulled on the Voi-Vod tour! But I usually did most of the driving. I liked being in the captain's chair, I liked driving long distances, liked being in control of what's on the stereo, the air conditioning, when it worked. We played in Alabama and we left at like 2:00 in the morning, I started driving and everyone started waking up at like 3:00 in the afternoon and I'd made it all the way to Miami, non stop.

Now comes the Voi-Vod tour.

I remember the first night, just being like, "uggh". I mean we thought we'd be able to draw seeing that we'd just played a lot of the cities like two or three months earlier. I do remember we had a trailer though, so we had more room and everyone could lay down, we took a sound man. But he just ended up getting tortured by Sean and Perry. They were relentless, he kind of brought it upon himself, but that' s where "Mentally Afflicted" came from, he had this book about these psychopaths and it just described Perry and Sean to a T, and they just thrived off that. But back to the tour, it was kind of deflating because we thought we were bigger than we were.

Now we need to get into the division factor of the band. It was Deen/ Robb and Sean/Perry with you in the middle.

Dude, it was like that from the onset of the Testament tour.

Really?

Yeah, there were a couple of guys who had it under control and a couple of guys who...(laughs).

So was it like this at home, or did the road bring it out?
No, it was like that at home. I had to play both sides, even with Debbie, I had to deal with her. She didn't want us to stay on Testament's bus and I had to talk her into it.
Now it's time to write the follow up to 'EN', when does Mechanic fall out of the picture?
I think we had gone through a lull, we made them a demo and they made some comments, they struck us the wrong way. We were in the process of falling out of favor with them, we had this mentality that we should be doing bigger and better stuff. One side of our camp was like "We should be doing this, we should have tour busses," and finally we just asked them for a release. They had just signed Trixter, so that was going to be their new mealticket.
In your opinoin, how did 'EN' do?
Well we should've been up near 50 to 100,000 after a few tours. That's what I think they expected, especially with their distribution. But we just didn't get the tours, man. That's what this band was about, playing live. I'm jumping ahead here, but during 'Oppressing...' Suicidal didn't want us on the Exodus and Suicidal tour and Johnny Z was our manager, he tried to get us on it and Mike Muir said "No". When the tour came through here they were playing The Warfield, which is a big venue,and we would've loved to play there, and they wanted us to open the show and we said no. All they wanted was our audience, we were like "Fuck you guys, we're not good enough to tour with you, but you want to use our home crowd".
Okay, back to Megaforce, was it as quick as the others say or was it a transition?
Yeah, it wasn't all that quick. Perry had done the Headbangers Ball tour [subbing for Tom Hunting/Exodus, it was Exodus/Anthrax 1989] so he goes out and is playing to a lot of people everynight and he's talking to a lot of **Vio-Lence** fans. He calls every now and then and say's the kids are out there, this is all possible, maybe there's something wrong with the whole Mechanic thing. Debbie was friends with Maria Ferraro (Megaforce A&R-Ed.) so we got on no problem.
What were your feelings when Perry was asked to help Exodus?
I was a little leary.
Were you afraid he'd leave?
I was covering my ass, that's for sure. I was scouting drummers, I mean some nights I'd talk to Perry on the phone and some night's I'd talk to Zet and I know how those guys are. But Perry seemed to be pretty loyal to us, especially because he was there from the beginning. Plus he was hearing a lot from the fans on that tour, so I'm sure that helped him stay loyal.
How were those guys?
Oh, they were just looking out for themselves.
So now Perry's back and soon you're on your way to Ithaca, NY.
Yep. Actually first we needed to find a producer, Jon and Marsha actually came out to see us at practice, and they were thinking of who was going to produce us. Terry Date had just done OverKill, 'The Years Of Decay', and he was up in this area working with Mother Love Bone and we went and spoke with him. The "interview" went really good and he was into what we were doing, but the scheduling was wrong. We mentioned Alex and Johnny really didn't want to use Alex...
Really?
Well he [Johnny] had used him for so many projects and they're totally good friends, so maybe Johnny just wanted to try and branch out and do something different. I had met him a few years before when he came here and worked with Testament. So we got to New York and it was great, it was snowing, we were up there isolated and we were totally ready to do the album. The band was getting along pretty good too, well, there'd be plenty of times where Perry would wake everyone up by smashing a mallet into the medicine cabinet of the hotel room. The rooms were connected by the medicine cabinet and he, like, never slept! That dude was so high strung he'd be up at like four in the morning banging on the fucking thing screaming "Wake Up"!
For what?
Just to be a dick!
I guess every band's got one!
Yeah, pretty much!
So where are we at now?
Our second and biggest mistake.
Firing Debbie.
Yeah, firing Debbie, which was really, really hard, especially for Deen, Robb and I. The other two were just like, "Fuck it, fire her," ya know? "get some other dude, be huge" (laughing).
But again, you're in the middle.
I did what was going to try and make the camp happy, dude, that was my whole downfall. Instead of trying to make people happy I should've just stood up for myself and said "This ain't right". Firing her blew everything for us...(long pause) we started losing contact with people because she was and still is so respected and liked. We couldn't get a tour, the whole Suicidal thing happened at this time, we were up for the Danzig/Soundgarden tour that ended up going to C.O.C. We couldn't get on shit so what do we do? We go out and fucking headline! We did what Testament did, but they pulled it off. It was cool being on a bus and the tour itself was fucking great, but we weren't winning over anyone new, we were supposed to get off that tour and go straight to Europe to hook up with Flotsam And Jetsam. During the headlining tour our booking agent, who was a friend of Debbie's drops us in the middle of the tour, which was unheard of! And we went into this lull which we never recovered from.
But the record was fresh out, you did the video and got Jerry Adamane...
That was a dark period. When we got Jerry we were just rolling with the punches, we were getting a little money at the time, we had gotten a merchandising advance, he puts us on this stupid tour and he didn't know what the hell he was doing. We'd get to clubs that had been shut down, club managers that didn't even know we were coming, etc. The whole Alien Sex Fiend shit, the RV breaking down. So he quits, we start getting managed by Alexis Olsen and Megaforce said "Alright, enough tour support for you, go write another album". I mean the whole 'Oppressing' cycle was based around that one tour and that was it, that totally crushed us.
Robb said that tour, headlining was the beginning of the end.
Oh totally. Business wise, personality wise, everything. You had two people being quiet, two people ranting and raving and one guy trying to bridge the gap, and pretty soon I just couldn't do it anymore. It got to the point where pride became my motivation, I still felt this was *my* band, and I was keeping everything together, trying to make it work with the guys we had. I could never kick Perry or Sean or anyone out of the band. I mean there'd be times Perry and Sean would be talking like "Oh Robb's not doing this or Robb's not doing that" and I was like "Fuck you guys, when's my time gonna come", they'd say the same thing about Deen and Sean would say it about Perry and vice versa.
Did business shit bring this up?

No not really, it was all personality shit, there were a couple of ruthless motherfuckers in the band that would say shit, dude, we were the biggest dysfunctional family there was! All we ever did was just talk shit to and about each other. Everyone would be doing it and like I said it was just ruthless shit that I would never even repeat here or anywhere. But that became the norm, touchy subjects, personal shit, everything. No one ever, oh wait, Perry and Sean went at it pretty good.

They turned on each other?!

Yeah, one time they just went at it and brawled on the bus, I thought it was one of the road crew, then I saw it was them and I was like, yeah, beat the shit out of each other (laughing)!

So the mini tour is over and you're stranded in Florida.

Yep. The plan was everyone was going to take a bus home, Robb flew home after he borrowed some money from Debbie. The rest of us planned on getting on a bus in the morning. Deen and I just said no fucking was were we going to travel across the counrty with those two assholes (laughing) so we left in the middle of the night and got a twelve hour headstart.

Where did this leave you with Megaforce?

I think they just wanted to shelve us. There was no money being out into us, we got minimal support for that tour and I really think, they thought they were getting something other than they did. We then start preproduction for 'Nothing To Gain', which took forever! We were doing demos and when he [Johnny Z] heard the tapes he wanted us to change this and change that and we just got fed up. We thought this is what we're going with and we wanted to go into the studio and he wanted us to keep writing. So against his will we go in, Alexis is still managing us, who managed Legacy in the early days and Mordred, he was doing a good job for us, totally professional, but he was dealing with the guys he had to deal with. Soon after he just got kind of tired of it and started collecting his percentage and that was it. We go into Fantasy Studios and thought everything would go good. In that time Megaforce lost it's distribution deal with Atlantic, and we just sat and sat. Robb's a guitar head, man, he's got to be playing, he's got to be doing stuff and he went stir crazy. He got fed up with Perry and probably even me and he started his own thing. He came and told me "I'm jamming with some friends, it's a side project", we asked him if it was like what we were doing and he said "a little bit" and we asked him to choose, and he chose that.

Now while recording 'NTG' Johnny Z is pushing for a more commercial style. The music does come out slower, a little on the commercial side, but was there a point where you just broke? You had to be sick of the fighting!

I was. I really was, and for 'Nothing To Gain' I had even lesser of a role because everything was geared towards writing for the label. It was a weird time, the band was writing lyrics as a band for the first time, and everyone was involved with the music as well and you can tell. I don't like the album, I don't like anything about it, even the recording process was really bad for me and I won't even take credit for that album at all, I leave that to the wanna be rock stars.

I still like some of the songs, I wish Alex could've worked with you. Not only would he have made it sound 100 times better, but he would've been honest with you and hopefully set the band straight.

Michael Rosen, at a point, dude I have a classic, classic part on video that I shot during the recording. It was a fifteen minute argument, just a rant and there was a few times he just wanted to beat the shit out of a couple of guys. So days and days of argueing, he just said fuck it, why pour your heart into something like this? I think a lot of the way the album sounded was due to this as well.

So 'NTG' is turned in and?

Yeah, we turn it in, they've lost their distribution and we wait. And wait, and wait, they own the album and won't let us shop it, they just let it set. We do some local shows and the crowd seems to be diminishing because we have no new product, it was the end. Then we're dropped, but we're still together and I thought we'd be able to get picked up and carry on. There were enough labels out there and I didn't think we'd have a problem getting picked up. But I think we were still feeling the after effects of what we did to Debbie. We got into a fight at Foundations Forum, Perry and Sean beat the living shit out of Shannon Hoon from Blind Melon.

No way!

Oh dude, it was so fucking funny! Shannon and his buddies, like Ricki Rachtman's Cathouse buddies were there and they talked shit to some chick Sean was with. And Sean just started kicking his ass in the Pool room and we just death patroled them, there was like five of them and like ten of us. I tried to say out of it because of all the business shit, I had a very good rep with a lot of people and I didn't want to be a part of that unless I had to. I just stood near and made sure this one guy didn't jump in, Perry had this guy in a headlock and was kicking another guy in the face and Sean's just kicking the shit out of Shannon. And this is happening at Foundations Forum! Everyone in the industry or business was there and everyone gets word that **Vio-Lence** are starting fights and all that. We brought it all on ourselves, man.

To close this out, just sum up the years in Vio-Lence.

It was about ten years for me, longer than anyone else, and it was definitely a learning experience. You lean how to deal with people, industry and all that. When Torque signed a deal I knew what to expect, I didn't expect anything! Anything I got, shit, I put out an album with me singing on it and that's all I wanted. That and I got to play Dynamo. You just learn to appreciate stuff and not take things for granted, dude we [**Vio-Lence**] had stuff lined up for us, we could've been huge if we just had the right attitudes and we chose not to. I regret some of the stuff we could've done, but I'm not going to live off of could've should've. It's what it was. Plenty of bands would've killed for what we had and I'm thankful for that. Plus the friendships with the guys in the band, sure they were all different, but it was worth it.

Thanks to the following for their help on this feature: Phil Demmel, Robb Flynn for the booze, the laughs and the trust, Sean Killian, Deen Dell and Perry Strickland - Thanks for the fucking killer music, past and present!! The King Of Los Angeles Brian "Subterfuge" Burdue for keeping me supplied through the years, Rich from Vegas, **www.stormclad.com** for the trade, Mike Tomte and everyone I forgot.

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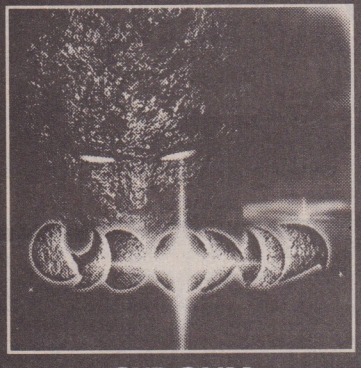

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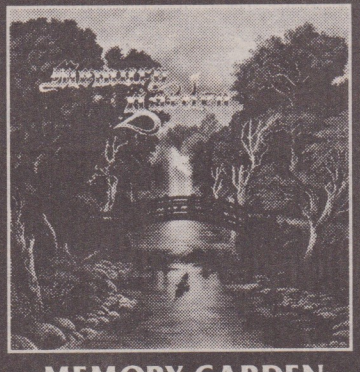

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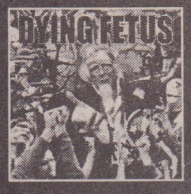

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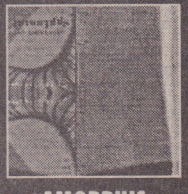

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